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In honor of beloved Virgil—

“O degli altri poeti onore e lume...”

—Dante, *Inferno*

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HELLENISTIC CULTURE AND SOCIETY

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From Alexander to Jesus

Ory Amitay



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To Effie, who followed me to the West of West and back home again

Acknowledgments

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Any mistakes, infelicities, and unsound judgment that remain are certainly my own.

Introduction

The idea for this book was conceived more than a decade ago near the tiny hamlet of Malana, situated in the modern-day Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, three or four days' march from the founts of the Hyphasis River. It is a small settlement, a mere five hundred strong when I visited there in the mid-1990s. Its inhabitants are secluded from their neighbors by language and custom, live by their own sacred ancestral law (dealing in depth with matters of purity) and are, in fact, a people unto themselves. They tell the following story: When Alexander the Great marched through India, he reached the river Beas (the Hyphasis's modern name). His soldiers would not cross it, and he was compelled to arrest his advance east. Yet one company did not turn back at the river. Rather, its men crossed to the other side and settled there. These were the forefathers of the present-day denizens of Malana.

None of the surviving Greek and Latin authors has preserved as much as a hint of any such group of hearty and adventurous soldiers. For all we know, the story may have been concocted by an enterprising worker in the flourishing north-Indian tourist industry, or perhaps by some clever Briton, back in the days when the Crown had an empire and the classics were widely read.¹ What is certain, however, is that the name of Alexander is still attractive enough to draw a number of western tourists over such terrain as even his hardy Macedonians would deem something more than a pleasant amble. The power of Alexander to enchant, about which I had till then only read in books, manifested itself in the field.

In subsequent years Alexander's enchantment over me grew stronger, his myth reappearing again and again in the unlikeliest of places. It appeared that Alexander stories could be told anywhere, and in a wild variety of languages. As I continued to read about Alexander, I became increasingly aware of a specific span of time, a crucial era in the history of western civilization and of humankind in general: the three centuries and more between Alexander of Macedon and Jesus of Nazareth. During this period monotheistic belief, already venerable in

Judaism and samaritanism, experienced wide-ranging development, which culminated in the birth of a new world religion—Christianity. Today, two millennia later, it is the most widespread religion in the world, both geographically and quantitatively.

The great importance of Alexander's historical achievement for the development of Christianity has long been recognized. It would seem that J. G. Droysen, Alexander's first great modern historian, embarked on his Hellenistic studies in order to understand the connection between the extension of Greekdom to the East and Christianity's birth. The ingenious W. W. Tarn made Alexander “the pioneer of one of the supreme revolutions in the world's outlook, the first man known to us who contemplated the brotherhood of man or the unity of mankind.” The relevance to the teachings of Christ is inescapable. This general notion was taken a step further by A. R. Anderson, who claimed that Alexander unconsciously “prepared the ground in which Christianity was to grow,” and styled him “a forerunner of Jesus, earlier representations of whom portrayed him in Alexander's likeness.”²

The notion of Alexander as a philosopher-king who strives for a Unity of Mankind has come under serious attack by scholarship since Word War II. This romantic image of Alexander has been pushed aside in favor of a cold hard look at the terrible devastation and suffering wrought in fact by his actions. This approach, influenced no doubt by the horrible twin World Wars and their associated atrocities, is still dominant today.³ To be sure, many of Alexander's actions (the massacre of the Branchidai and the annihilation of the Kossaioi after Hephaistion's death come to mind) strike the modern reader as terrible war crimes. It was never pleasant to be the object of Alexander's ire.

Yet the influence of Alexander on the world of myth and religion depended not solely on what he did, but also on what other people thought, told, and wrote about him.⁴ Plutarch's speeches *On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander* (*De Fortuna*, discussed in [chapters 4 and 8](#)), which form a crucial part of Tarn's evidence in his “Unity of Mankind” theory, may not contain much relevant information about Alexander *historicus*, but they are prime evidence for Alexander *mythicus* at the turn of the second century C.E. This distinction between Alexander the real person and Alexander as he appeared to later generations—two very different personae—allows me to continue the line of thought initiated by Droysen and Tarn, while taking into account the sober and salubrious criticism of recent generations. The aim of this book is thus to suggest to the reader a possible link connecting the life, career and posthumous reputation of Alexander the Great with that of Jesus Christ.

Before moving on to my discussion, three methodological remarks are in order. The first concerns the way in which this book relates to Jesus. As the following chapters will show, my discussion deals at length with the interaction of myth and history during Alexander's lifetime, as well as after his death. It thus treats Alexander both as a historical character, and as a mythical one. This is not the case with Jesus, who is treated for his myth alone, and that only in the last chapter. The reason for this discrimination is twofold. For one, I must confess that I know precious little for certain about the historical Jesus.

As is well known, ancient testimony about Jesus is limited to his Conception, a unique and isolated episode a year before his Barmitzvah, the Ministry and the Crucifixion. From what seems purely historical about Jesus' life, we get the impression of an ardent student of the Torah (with a strong liking for legend and parable) driven by the inspiration to make the world a better place. Jesus' open disdain for worldly goods, the statements about the practical inability of the rich to attain the Kingdom of Heaven, his avowed pacifism, as well as the communistic nature of the early church, all point to what we today call the political Left. Greed, it is true, was hardly paramount among Alexander's reasons for undertaking his great adventure; yet Jesus' own outlook on the vanity of riches can be easily explained within his immediate Jewish context, without an appeal to the Macedonian. From the point of view of political science, Jesus appears as a monarchist, and in that he could well identify with Alexander, but also with a whole plethora of other monarchs who had by then already filled the pages of history books. If, indeed, Jesus conducted his Ministry in his early 30s rather than in his late 40s (more on this at the beginning of [chapter 8](#)), he could at least feel some affinity to Alexander in that at the end both men were about the same age. Even so, as far as Jesus *historicus* is concerned, he does not seem to have owed much to Alexander.⁵

Not so Jesus *mythicus*. A highly complex figure, Jesus obviously made a huge impression on his contemporaries, an impression that has since grown and multiplied immensely, and is still evolving and reaching new audiences even today. During this process the figure of Jesus had shed much of its historical clothing, and put on mythical apparel. The evidence we have today about Jesus is imbued with supernatural action and happenstance. As such, they form a vital part of Jesus' myth, but—unless they be interpreted as parables, or perhaps as hyperbole inspired by more mundane circumstances—they cannot be accepted at face value as historical facts.

This book deals throughout with questions of belief and religious feeling. It does so from a historical, rational point of view. In other

words, miracles and Divine Providence are never allowed to take part in the reasoning about causality. In fact, the possibility that Divine Providence even exists is practically ignored by the modern discipline of history. Once admitted, it would leave little or no room for any answer to the question, “Why did things happen the way they did?” other than, “Thus God willed it.” A theologian might turn my thesis around to postulate Alexander as an instrument of Divine Providence, and the peculiarities of his career and myth as means of *praeparatio euangelica*.⁶ I believe that such an argument can certainly be made, though not by me. The reader is invited to form her or his own opinion as to the more appropriate disciplinary prism through which to look at the evidence gathered in the following pages.

The second issue concerns the question of history and myth. Early in my graduate studies I read Lévi-strauss's famous article, “The structural study of Myth”.⁷ While I have never considered myself a “structuralist,” nor ever taken Lévi-strauss's advice for a card system, I became thoroughly convinced of the usefulness of his “gross constituent units.” According to this notion, the meaning of a myth lies not only in its telling as a whole (which may certainly tell us a lot about the people who tell it and the context in which they live), but also in the various units, or building blocks, which form it. By looking at these gross constituent units, we are able to open the discussion to new questions. For example, Lévi-strauss's analysis of the Oedipus myth gives rise to a discussion about the meaning of foot deformities. In other words, the structuralist approach enables us to think about a deeper meaning of myth, outside both its framework and its immediate context. Another principle I learned from this article is that a myth, any myth, is alive as long as it is told. Myths are thus not merely stories, but stories which have a story of their own. They are almost like living beings.

The notion of myth as an organic entity has often occupied my thoughts during the research and writing of this book. On one hand, going over the evidence again and again I was strengthened in the idea that myths have lives, even interests, of their own. On the other, such thoughts as I had on the subject quickly deteriorated to simple reification, or worse, to mysticism. I thus continued to work without a clearly defined methodology, examining the evidence in the sources on a case by case basis.

Only during the second revision of the manuscript did I come across the concept of *meme* (rhymes with ‘cream’), coined originally by Dawkins and expanded since.⁸ In a nutshell, a meme is an idea or a form of behavior which can be copied through imitation—replicated, in the language of memetics—from one brain to another. A meme is to the world of culture what the gene is to biological evolution. When

applied to the study of myth, it is not dissimilar to Lévi-strauss's gross constituent unit. The improvement of memetics over Lévi-strauss comes through the introduction of a model for cultural evolution, which provides a positive method for engaging with the paradox of myth as a living entity. In Dawkins's own words: "We must not think of genes as conscious, purposeful agents. Blind natural selection, however, makes them behave rather as if they were purposeful, and it has been convenient, as a shorthand, to refer to genes in the language of purpose, for example, when we say 'genes are trying to increase their numbers in future gene pools,' what we really mean is 'those genes that behave in such a way as to increase their number in future gene pools tend to be the genes whose effects we see in the world.'"⁹ Instead of *gene*, read *meme*, or even *myth*.

The application of meme theory to the study of myth has some manifest advantages. First and foremost, it gives us a way to relate to the evolution of myths, by applying the principle of natural selection. such an approach comes in handy when one addresses the phenomenon of evolutionary syncretism. Why has Isis become the emblem of Egyptian female divinity, while Hathor is familiar mostly to Egyptologists? Why is Jesus worshipped ecumenically while Herakles is confined to "Greek mythology" and sol *Invictus* to academic libraries? Looking at these questions from the meme's-eye view we try to figure out, not why the worshippers of some particular characters outdid the worshippers of other particular characters, but rather what are the traits (memes) of any particular figure (memeplex) which allowed it to replicate faster, spread farther and survive longer. In memetic terms, the thesis of this book is that the Jesus memeplex replicated a great many memes adopted and developed first by Alexander the living person, and after his death by the mythical memeplex which he had created. The popularity and success of Alexander thus furthered the popularity and success of Jesus. Eventually, each memeplex found a separate niche—Jesus in the fields of faith and religion, Alexander in the fields of history and myth.

Obviously, the theory of memetics still requires a great deal of thinking and tinkering. since I have become acquainted with it at such a late stage of my work, I decline to take up the challenge in this book. Accordingly, I have used memetic (and structuralist) language sparingly.

The final methodological point concerns typography. The reader of this work will notice an unwonted use of capital letters, referring most often to Royalty and Divinity as objects of special reverence. I have used these wherever I felt that they would have been used by people in antiquity, had they written Queen's English. The use of capital letters is, therefore, a means of articulating judgment.

The first half of the book deals with the special relation between Alexander and his mythical ancestral Hero—Herakles. By the very circumstances of his birth as heir to the Royal Argead family, Alexander was conceived as a direct descendant of Herakles. This connection is evident in the earliest stages of Alexander's career, and remained paramount throughout his life. The first three chapters of this book trace Alexander's self-relation to Herakles, in chronological and geographical order, from his birth to the Revelation at Siwah ([chapter 1](#)); in the mountains and on the steppes of central Asia ([chapter 2](#)); and in India ([chapter 3](#)). My argument is that Alexander lived his entire life in emulation, competition, even self-identification with his ancestral Hero.

[Chapter 4](#) deals with some topics from Alexander's lifetime which cannot be dated accurately, but mostly with the various interactions of Alexander's memory with the myth of Herakles in the centuries after his death. My argument here is that the myths of these two characters exerted a strong influence on one another, creating a sort of symbiosis. This relation between the two myth cycles thus mirrors the process of emulation and identification of the living Alexander with Herakles.

The association of Alexander and Herakles is crucial for a number of reasons. Firstly, the emulation of and competition with Herakles helped Alexander navigate his own way from humanity to Divinity. This transition, extraordinary in the Greek world before Alexander, became quite fashionable after him. Secondly, the myth of Alexander (spawned in his lifetime and developed after his death) replicated from the Herakles cycle a number of crucial motifs, such as Divine sonship, double paternity, a world Mission on behalf of humanity, and finally Divinization (*apotheosis*). All these motifs form an essential part also of the myth of Jesus.

In [chapter 5](#) I treat a unique episode, the story of Alexander's meeting with the Amazon Queen. The importance of this story is twofold: first, it is a myth created already in Alexander's lifetime, providing yet another example of the creative mythmaking that accompanied his journey. second, it testifies that the vision of a harmonized world, one where Greeks and Barbarians could live in harmony and close cooperation, was indeed at one point on Alexander's mind. The significance of this notion is especially evident in comparison with the conventional Amazonian adventures of Greek Heroes (among them Herakles and Achilles, both ancestors of Alexander). Here the approach to the ultimate other is amiable rather than hostile, and sexual relations are aimed not at domination but

rather at procreation. such a vision of Alexander could be seen as a prelude to the kind of idealized Alexander envisioned by later interpreters, from Plutarch to Tarn (who, ironically, dismissed the story as scurrilous gossip).

Chapter 6 traces the fate of Alexander's self-created mythical identity as a supernatural figure in the first generation after his death. As is well known, Alexander's vision of the united world empire died a slow and vicious death at the hands of the Successors. On the other hand, the notion of a self-Divinized monarch, deriving a sense of legitimacy both from an active cult and from a lively mythology, proved much more useful, and had a much longer life span. In this chapter I trace those of the Successors' actions that helped entrench Alexander's status as a superhuman, and established the pattern whereby a man could become a God.

In **chapter 7** I explore three different and independent manifestations of Alexander in Jewish eschatological thought. One outstanding phenomenon is common to all three contexts: Alexander is situated at the very beginning of a new era, perceived as the last stage of history before the onset of the End of Days. We thus see that Alexander was understood in various strands of second temple and rabbinic Judaism as a necessary step on the road to the advent of the Messiah. such a position allows us to ask the question whether, and to what degree, the myth of Alexander could also influence the theology and mythology of the One who is to come.

The concluding **chapter 8** features three parts. In the first I ask how it was possible for monotheistic mythology to give birth to a Son of God. The proposed answer is that Alexander's historical role as the paragon of *apotheosis*, coupled with his positive reception in wide circles within the Jewish world of antiquity and with his penultimate position in contemporary eschatology, could help prepare the way, at least for some people, for the acceptance by Jews of the Divine Sonship principle. In the second part I compare the myths of Alexander and Jesus, noting both the inherent similarities between them, and the comparable usage to which they are put by others. Other characters are invoked in order to demonstrate how different myths share key gross constituent units, or memes, which create a close affinity between them. Most notable among these is Herakles, whose own Divine Sonship, double paternity, world Mission and eventual *apotheosis* are so reminiscent of Jesus that some modern scholars have looked to his myth as a possible model for early Christian mythographers. Any admirer of Alexander, Herakles, or any of the other Divinities and Heroes who shared the same qualities, would thus find the myth of Jesus perfectly palatable, even natural. Finally, I stress the one criterion which distinguishes Alexander as a

unique role model for Jesus—his historical humanity. All other figures who fall into the same category, sharing the stories of Divine sonship, double paternity and a transition from the human to the Divine, are all purely mythical. Alexander, on the other hand, was a flesh-and-blood character who broke the barrier between humanity and Divinity. He is thus a unique forerunner of Christ.

Son of Man, Son of God

HERITAGE AND CHILDHOOD

Herakles begat Hyllos; Hyllos begat Kleadates and he Aristomachos; Aristomachos begat Temenos, who ruled in Argos.¹ Three of the descendants of Temenos went from Argos as exiles; the youngest of these, Perdikkas, became the ruler of the Macedonians. Perdikkas begat Argaios, Argaios Philippos and Philippos Aeropos; his son was Alketes and his Amyntas. Amyntas begat Alexander, who ran the *stadion* in Olympia and was recognized as a Greek from Argos by the *Hellenodikai*—the official referees of the ancient Olympic games.² This Alexander bore Amyntas and he Arrhidaios and he Amyntas, who was King.³ His son was Philippos, who subdued all of Hellas. His son was Alexander. Or so might a Macedonian serving under Alexander relate the essential history of his Royal House.⁴

A fan of Euripides—there were many in the Macedonian court, not least of them Alexander⁵—might tell a different story: Archelaos, a son of Temenos, had been exiled from Argos by his brothers. Having fled to Thrace, he won renown as a warrior, but also aroused the suspicion of the local king, who attempted to kill him off. Archelaos managed to slay the king and was once more forced to flee. Inspired by Apollo and led by a goat, he arrived in Macedonia and founded its ancient capital—Aigai (Goatville).⁶

The connection of the Macedonian Royal House with Herakles was no trifle. The story of King Alexander ('the first,' as he is known to modern historians) is proof enough. His ability to produce a lineage going all the way to Herakles (or perhaps to Temenos; Herodotus does not say) made him eligible to compete in the Olympic games. Proven Heraklid descent was the ultimate answer to the all-important

question, “Who is a Greek?” From the Greek perspective, shared by both the Olympic judges and the Macedonian King, their recognition had transformed him from barbarian to Greek.

Heroic ancestry was serious business. One might consider Herodotus's introduction of the leaders of the Greek navy that assembled in Aigina in the spring of 480: “Their general and admiral was Leutychides son of Menares, who traced his lineage from son to father through Hegesilaos, Hippokratides, Leutychides, Anaxilaos, Archidemos, Anaxandrides, Theopompos, Nikandros, Charilaos, Eunomos, Polydektes, Prytanis, Euryphron, Prokles, Aristodemos, Aristomachos, Kleodaios, to Hyllos who was the son of Herakles. [...] The general of the Athenians was Xanthippos son of Aripbron” (8.131). surely, the Athenian would have loved to tout a long list of names planted deep in Heroic times, had he had one.⁷

Myth played an important role in mapping out political relationships. In his address to Philippos published in 346 B.C., ten years before Alexander's accession, Isokrates made good use of the Heraklid origin of the Macedonian kings.⁸ After a longish introduction, Isokrates suggests that Philippos take upon himself the mission of reconciling Argos, sparta, Thebes and Athens. This daunting diplomatic task ought to be facilitated by the traditional good relations between these cities and the Macedonian ruling house. Mythical reference to Herakles plays a crucial role in Isokrates' mental framework of Greek diplomacy: the Thebans honor Herakles with parades and sacrifices above all other Gods; the Lakedaimonians have given the kingship to his descendants; the Athenians helped him win immortality and protected his children.⁹ According to Isokrates the connection between Herakles and the three cities—belonging entirely to the realm of myth—ought to set an example for present-day Heraklid policies. In fact, Isokrates does not even refer to these stories as myths. For him they are simply ancient history.¹⁰

Nor is this mere rhetorical flourish; Herakles is present throughout Isokrates' presentation. For example, when he saw Hellas torn by wars, *stasis* (extreme civil unrest) and other evils, Herakles put a stop to all of that and reconciled the cities. With the power of the united Greeks behind him, he managed to capture Troy and become master of the Aegean. Herakles had shown “with whom and against whom wars should be waged.”¹¹ This is followed by a clear call to Philippos to emulate his progenitor (113-14). Later in his speech Isokrates all but presents the leading men of Hellas as a Heroic band of Herakleidai, prevented from concerted action by loyalty to their cities—a curse from which Philippos himself is supposed to be free (127). Isokrates ends his address on a theological note: both Philippos and himself are instruments in the hands of the Gods—he is goad and

guide, whereas Philippos is assigned the realm of action.¹²

We do not know what Philippos thought of Isokrates' address. We can only imagine what effect it had on the mind of young Alexander. We do know, however, that Alexander made good use of the Herakles myth at the very beginning of his political career. The first of the Greeks to come over to him were the Thessalians. Alexander convinced them to concede to him the hegemony over Hellas, which he had inherited from his father. He also reminded them of their ancient relation through Herakles. Just as the orator had suggested, he spoke amicably and held great prospects.¹³

Yet argument from myth was not enough to bring over all the Thessalians to Alexander's side. The second century C.E. Polyainos preserves a story of military operations: "When the Thessalians were guarding Tempe, Alexander dug into [Mt.] Ossa's steep rocks and formed little steps. He and the Macedonians climbed these steps, reached the top, and by going over Ossa held Thessaly, while the Thessalians were guarding the narrow pass at Tempe. Even now travelers going through Tempe can see the rocks of Ossa built like a ladder. They call them 'Alexander's ladder.'"¹⁴

Can the two accounts be reconciled? Conceivably, the valley of Tempe was held against Alexander by a Thessalian force. To avoid direct confrontation, Alexander took his men over Mt. Ossa and came down behind the Thessalian position. Once he arrived in the city of Larissa, Alexander was joined by members of the ruling clan of the Aleuadai, both related and loyal, and convened the council of the Thessalian federation (*koinon*). Influenced by Alexander's appeal to a common origin, his sweet-talking, and the fact that his forces had circumvented their defenses, the Thessalians consented and made him their leader.¹⁵

We thus see the vividness of the Heroic past in Alexander's mind. His mythical relations with the Thessalians were a political reality. A practical man, Alexander did not rely solely on arguments from ancient history when securing the loyalty of another party; promises and threats were also a part of the mix, and most of all swift military action. The futility of relying on Myth alone would be shown by the plea of Kleadas after the fall of Thebes. Kleadas, who was aware of Alexander's "private superstition" concerning Herakles, begged him to remember his great ancestor and spare the city of the Hero's birth.¹⁶ Alexander did no such thing.

FROM THE DANUBE TO THE HELLESPONT

We next meet Herakles on the northern bank of the Danube. In the spring of 335 B.C. Alexander, in his first major campaign as King,

marched northward to ascertain the loyalty and cooperation of the Balkan tribes previously subjected by his father.¹⁷ Some Triballian and Thracian rebels had taken refuge on an island in the Istros, our Danube. After an aborted attack on the island, Alexander decided to attack the Getai on the further side of the river. Seeing their army assembled on the further bank, Alexander was seized by *pothos*—a strong urge or desire—to go beyond the river. Through his intelligence and resourcefulness he managed a swift and safe crossing. He then proceeded to attack the Getai, put them to flight, and gained much booty. After razing their city, Alexander sacrificed on the bank of the river to Zeus the savior (*Sotēr*), to Herakles and to the river Istros itself, for allowing him to cross.¹⁸

The *pothos* of Alexander has become a familiar topic in scholarship, both ancient and modern.¹⁹ It would be difficult to deny that strong sentiment and desire always formed a part of Alexander's motivation; one can hardly understand his striving for achievement otherwise. On the bank of the Istros Alexander had his first chance to surpass all who had come before him, and to set a precedent. No commander setting out from Greece had ever reached that far north before. Philippos had reached the river itself, but did not cross it; Alexander now had a chance to do exactly that.²⁰ The drive to pass known boundaries would become a dominant factor in Alexander's future campaigns.

The crossing itself was perceived as extremely perilous, and the Getai were shocked to see Alexander appear so quickly on the northern bank. Alexander's own sentiment is manifest in the triple sacrifice, especially to the river Istros. The meaning of this sacrifice is clear: a Divinity was in charge of the river and its crossings; Alexander had received its approval and support. Later in his career Alexander would not neglect to give due honors to river Gods, when crossing or navigating their dangerous waters.²¹

The sacrifice to Zeus *Sotēr* is even more revealing: the only other time we hear of sacrifices by Alexander or his companions to savior Zeus involves the safe arrival of Nearchos's navy after its circumnavigation of India. Alexander even swore that he rejoiced more in the safe return of this navy than in all his good fortune throughout the campaign.²² Granted that this may be a hyperbole flowing from Nearchos's pen, the sea journey from India to the Persian Gulf was nonetheless a dangerous endeavor, which threw open new frontiers. Such was also the crossing of the Danube. Help from the Gods in overcoming the elements deserved appropriate thanks.

Herakles fits well into the picture. He was the trail-blazing Hero *par excellence*, always establishing new frontiers. Isokrates, who had called on Philippos to emulate Herakles, described in these words the actions of the Macedonian's great forefather: "And after doing these things, he

put up the so-called pillars of Herakles—a trophy over the barbarians and a memorial to his *aretē* and the dangers he had undertaken—a border to the lands of the Greeks.”²³ These pillars—at the strait of Gibraltar—symbolized not only the limit between known and unknown geography, but also the utmost boundary of the humanly possible.²⁴

The myth of Herakles had long been connected with the river Istros. Nearly a century and a half before Alexander's campaign, Pindar sang how Herakles brought the gift of the olive to Olympia from the springs of the Danube.²⁵ A sacrifice to Herakles by his young descendant, who had taken up the task of expanding the limits of the world known to the Greeks, was highly appropriate. Four years earlier Philippos had made a vow to dedicate a statue of Herakles at the mouth of the river.²⁶ He may well have had similar mythical connections in mind.

The next appearance of Herakles once more involves a sacrifice by Alexander, this time after the crossing of the Hellespont. Alexander was the first to jump from the ship to the Asian shore, spear in hand and armor-clad, in imitation of Protesilaos.²⁷ This gesture was highly symbolic. When the Greek navy had arrived near Troy, Protesilaos was the first to disembark, soon to be killed according to the dictates of Fate. By imitating him, Alexander sent a double message: first, he took it on himself to confront this mythic peril, signaling to his men that he would not spare himself while sending them off to fight (a promise which he kept throughout); and second, that his own fate was to be different from Protesilaos's—he would live to fight another day. This message was fortified by the erection of two altars, both where Alexander embarked on one side of the strait, and where he landed on the other. These altars he dedicated to Zeus *Apobatērios* (protector of disembarkers), Athena and Herakles.²⁸

The crossing of the Hellespont and the visit to Ilion are pregnant with symbolism.²⁹ Notably, they bear some resemblance to the ceremony on the Danube: Zeus, in charge of the operation, ensured that Alexander's army cross safely; Athena was honored as the patron Goddess of Ilion—the strong local deity; Herakles, beside his ever-relevant role as ancestor of the Argead house, was also the agent opening up new lands for conquest.³⁰ Further, the sacrifice to Herakles invoked memories of the Hero's own campaign against Troy, which ended in great triumph and with the installation of Priam on the throne.³¹ One recalls that in Ilion Alexander sacrificed to Priam himself, in an attempt to appease the spirit of the Trojan king and end the feud with the house of Neoptolemos.³² Alexander took care to honor both sides in the Trojan war. From its very beginning his Hellenic crusade bore the seeds of reconciliation.

On the eve of the battle of Issos (autumn 333 B.C.), Alexander arrived at the Kilikian city of Mallos. Finding the city in a state of *stasis*, he took control, put an end to the hostilities, and freed the city from the tribute it had paid to Darius. Alexander ascribed his beneficence towards the city to common origins: the Mallotai were settlers sent by the Argives, whereas he claimed descent from the Argive Herakleidai.³³

The straightforward politics of the Mallian *stasis* can be easily conjectured. shortly before he turned to Mallos, Alexander occupied the neighboring city of soloi, where he deposed the pro-Persian oligarchic faction and taught democracy to its citizens. This, however, was a far cry from the celebrated freedom of the Greeks; the imposition of democracy was accompanied by the installation of a garrison and a fine of 200 talents.³⁴ In this light we can better understand the situation in Mallos. Competing factions were bound to harness local rivalries to the greater struggle taking place around them, while neither Alexander nor Darius could afford to overlook the city, strategically located near the gates of syria.³⁵ Ironically, the outbreak of *stasis* served the city well. Due to the fact that it could boast an active pro-Macedonian faction, the city not only escaped a fine, such as was exacted from soloi, but also received a generous tax cut.

Yet the Mallian *stasis* was an ancient affair, much older than the Persian-Macedonian conflict. If one is to believe the myth-tellers, its origins are to be sought in the chaotic aftermath of the Trojan war.³⁶ A full treatment of Mallian myth—a complex and convoluted topic—lies beyond the scope of this book.³⁷ However, the core of the myth is the same in all surviving tellings: two Heroes, Mopsos and Amphilochos, conduct a relentless struggle for the mastery of Mallos's oracle, and for the city itself. The struggle and the enmity continue well after the protagonists' deaths. Even their final resting places are kept apart.

Strabo, Curtius and Arrian, our sources for the incident, are rather concise. They tell us nothing of the wheeling and dealing which must have preceded Alexander's arrangement. The outcome, however, is expressed clearly: Alexander sided with Amphilochos and his supporters. This preference was made known by symbolic sacrifice to Amphilochos “as to a Hero.”³⁸ Mopsos is passed over in silence.

Why did Alexander make that particular choice? If, as seems likely, the “Amphilochians” had decided to support him, while the “Mopsians” opted to stay loyal to Darius, his choice is self-explanatory. The sources, however, couch Alexander's decision in mythological, not political, terms. strabo states distinctly that

Alexander sacrificed to Amphilochos because of their common Argive origins; Arrian ascribes the tax cut to the very same reason.³⁹

But that is not all. Herakles had occupied a place in Mallian myth long before Alexander. Three series of coins, dated to the last century of Persian rule, feature Herakles' head with a lion's skin around his neck, and Herakles and a lion on the capital of a column.⁴⁰ The brevity of the sources, as well as his absence from the main tellings of Mallian mythology, make it hard to assess what role Herakles played in the events of 333 B.C. One may guess that his prominence served to amplify the city's Argive connection.⁴¹

Thus, as in Thessaly, Alexander's Heraklid origin and the exigencies of diplomacy came together in a useful manner. Isokrates had advised Philippos to follow the example of Herakles in putting an end to internecine strife, and to direct the belligerent energy of the Greeks against Persia. This is exactly what Alexander did at Mallos. He appears as a reconciler of *stasis*, a peacemaker among Greeks, and that on the eve of his first confrontation with the King of Kings.⁴²

FACES OF POWER

The confrontation at Issos was a cardinal turning point in Alexander's campaign. Unlike the battle at the Granikos, where he had defeated a small expeditionary force headed by mere satraps, at Issos he crushed a Persian *Grande Armée* and put King Darius himself to flight. This huge success redefined the entire situation in more ways than one. Militarily, it proved that the Macedonian war machine was capable of defeating a Persian Royal army. Politically, it not only presented Alexander as Darius's equal, but also enabled him to assert his superiority.⁴³ Financially, the capture of the Persian war chest in Damascus shortly after the battle dispelled once and for all the liquidity problems Alexander had experienced earlier in his campaign. It also allowed him to demonstrate his newly gained dominion through the massive minting of a brand-new coinage.⁴⁴ Wisely, Alexander chose to mint his new currency in accordance with the Attic standards. This, and the fact that the precious metal reserves at his disposal (and at the successors' after him) hugely outweighed those of Athens, made his money the most widely used in the Hellenistic world.⁴⁵

Unfortunately, the ancient historians, whose accounts form the backbone of every modern attempt to reconstruct Alexander's history, show no interest in his far-reaching monetary reform. Although it must have been preceded by consultation, debate, even controversy, our sources are completely silent about the entire affair. still one thing is certain: the decisions reached in regards to the new coinage reflect

Alexander's own opinion. Immediately after the battle of Issos Alexander sacrificed to the three Divinities, who had also protected his crossing of the Hellespont: Zeus, Herakles and Athena.⁴⁶ This very same trio appears also on the new coinage minted by Alexander.⁴⁷

The types chosen for the new coin of the realm mark out a clear mythological framework, with Herakles as its focal point. To start with the most precious metal, Alexander's gold coins depict Athena, Herakles' special protector.⁴⁸ The silver coinage, most numerous by far, depicts Herakles himself on the obverse, with Zeus, his father, on the reverse. The bronze coins display Herakles' head on the obverse, with his staple weapons—bow and club—on the reverse. Thus, with two manifestations of his head and one of his weaponry, Herakles occupies three out of the six types used on Alexander's new currency.

The importance of Herakles in the new minting scheme underlies also the choice of prototype for one of the images on the new silver. It has been convincingly demonstrated that the Zeus on the Herakles-Zeus tetradrachms is based on the model of earlier Persian coinage minted in Tarsos by the satrap Mazaios, and featuring Ba'alatarz—the Ba'al of Tarsos.⁴⁹ This particular choice certainly had a practical side—Tarsos had been a major Persian mint, and its personnel and infrastructure were readily available (and much closer than Alexander's most prominent mint, in Amphipolis). But such a decision also had considerable ideological implications. On the one hand, the assumption of oriental attributes by Zeus signified the correspondence of Alexander's pantheon with that of his new subjects. On the other, the translation of the legend—bearing Alexander's name—from Aramaic to Greek made amply clear who was the new boss in town. The reverse of the coin thus stood simultaneously for both continuity and change.⁵⁰

The obverse of Alexander's new silver was a different matter altogether. Had he simply copied Mazaios's coins, Zeus-Ba'alatarz would have been accompanied by the image of a lion attacking a stag or a bull.⁵¹ Alexander, however, discarded this type to make room for his ancestral Hero, Herakles. Moreover, Alexander's Herakles looks nothing like earlier manifestations of the Hero on local Tarsian coins. Rather, his image stands in line with the Herakles types of traditional fourth-century Macedonian coinage.⁵² The choice of types for this new coinage thus displays a concrete ideological rationale. The fact that the image of Herakles was drawn from traditional Macedonian imagery indicates that Alexander did not merely use whatever types were conveniently available. On the contrary, his choice was deliberate, and sends a clear theological and political message: while the sky God Zeus-Ba'al was universal and continuous, his enforcer on earth was new and Macedonian.⁵³

Not only do the coins advertise the ascendancy of Macedon, they also make a clear statement about Alexander. Consider the reverse of a bronze coin: the club and the encased bow lie horizontally, and sandwiched between them is Alexander's name.⁵⁴ While the legend on the coin formally signifies the authority responsible for the coin's minting, it also suggests a different question: not only "Whose coin is this?", but also "Whose weapons are these?"⁵⁵ The coin thus creates an opportunity for fruitful ambiguity—the club and the bow belong not only to Herakles, whose face appears on the obverse side, but also to Alexander, whose own name lies parallel to them. The same notion is supported by the conscious decision to depict Herakles without his usual beard.⁵⁶

The introduction of the Macedonian Herakles into the new monetary system is thus made to echo the sudden, overwhelming appearance of Alexander on the stage of history. What Herakles was to the world of myth, Alexander was to be in reality. This juxtaposition of the two characters created a memetic coalition between them. It is thus hardly surprising that in later generations—both in antiquity and in modern times—their identities on the coins tended to become confused or conflated.⁵⁷ As we shall see presently, this process of identification or coalition, beginning with the introduction of the new coinage, received a major boost from subsequent events.

THE TYRIAN AFFAIR

The failure to kill Darius at Issos, or at least to take him prisoner, presented Alexander with a tough choice, which gave rise to one of the most famous strategic decisions in military history. Would he pursue Darius eastward in an attempt to get hold of the King's person, or march south along the Levantine coast, in order to secure his own lines of communication and cut Persia off from the Mediterranean? The sources give no clue as to the nature and extent of Alexander's intelligence operations at this stage of the campaign. We do not know how much resistance he expected to meet in the Levant and in Egypt. Yet initial signs were encouraging. Straton, crown prince of Arados (biblical Arvad), surrendered to Alexander his island city with its continental suburbs, and decked him with a golden crown. Further down the road, the city of Byblos (Gval) followed suit. At Sidon popular pressure forced the pro-Persian king to abdicate. He was replaced by a more congenial, if obscure, candidate.⁵⁸

The next station along the coast was Tyre. Initially, the pattern of friendly cooperation was repeated. A delegation of dignitaries, including the king's son, came out to the mainland to greet Alexander. They, too, presented the young Macedonian with a golden crown, and

promised to do whatever he should order. In an impressive display of largesse and hospitality, they even brought out of the city a great store of provisions for the army. Alexander was pleased and gladly accepted the friendship of the Tyrians.⁵⁹

The trouble started when Alexander made a special request: he wanted to cross over to the island and sacrifice there to Herakles. To Alexander's great surprise, the Tyrians would not allow him on their island. Rather, they suggested he conduct whatever rites he wished at the God's precinct in Old Tyre, on the mainland. Alexander became irate. He sent the ambassadors back to the city with angry threats, advising them strongly not to trust to the safety of their island. They, in turn, tried to convince the populace, but to no avail. The Tyrians reached a decision to defy Alexander even at the risk of a siege.⁶⁰

Why this unfortunate turn of events?⁶¹ According to Diodorus (17.40.3), the Tyrians never abandoned their loyalty to Persia. Their purpose, rather, was to entangle Alexander in a long siege, which would allow Darius ample time to reorganize and put together another army. Trusting in the strength of their position and in aid from Carthage, they were willing to undergo a siege in view of future rewards for their loyalty. Diodorus's argument, while sensible and consistent with his own narrative, makes little sense in view of the rest of the evidence. It is especially hard to see why the Tyrians should provide the Macedonian army with abundant provisions, while planning to undergo a siege by the very same army!⁶²

Arrian provides a different explanation. The Tyrians refused Alexander entrance to their city in order to maintain neutrality. By refusing to choose sides at this juncture, the Tyrians hoped to avoid the dangers of supporting the eventual loser. Yet despite the popularity of this argument with modern scholars,⁶³ it presents serious difficulties. To begin, the measures taken by the Tyrians up to this point hardly amount to neutrality. What would Darius have said about the golden crown and generous provisions, had he wiped Alexander out at Gaugamela? Further, if there ever was a serious attempt to maintain neutrality, Alexander's wrath at the initial refusal should have made it clear that the notion was quite hopeless. This message was conveyed to the city folk very clearly by their ambassadors. It was soon reinforced by Alexander's energetic operations. Neutrality cannot have been an option.

The answer lies in the details of Alexander's request. According to Curtius, Alexander provided two reasons for his wish to sacrifice to Herakles: first, the Macedonian Kings believed themselves to be the descendants of the God; second, Alexander specifically had been admonished by an oracle to do so.⁶⁴ The Heraklid connections of the Macedonian royal house have been discussed above. The aforesaid

oracle may be that of Amphilochos at Mallos. Although this is never explicitly stated, it stands to reason that Alexander should consult this famous oracle on the eve of a crucial battle. A prophetic instruction to sacrifice to Herakles at Tyre would be considered as highly auspicious. After all, only a decisive victory at Issos would allow Alexander anywhere near that city. We can thus see why Alexander was so keen on following the words of the oracle and on fulfilling his oath.

The Tyrians, on the other hand, found themselves in a delicate situation. Alexander arrived at a highly inopportune moment, just as they made ready to celebrate the annual festival of the *Egersis*, or Resurrection, of Melqart—the Tyrian Herakles.⁶⁵ Alexander's request to sacrifice on the island presented a double difficulty. First, religious observance required that the island be free of foreigners during the holiday.⁶⁶ This accounts for the Tyrian counter-proposal, that Alexander fulfill his vow in the older sanctuary on the mainland. It also explains the Tyrian statement reported by Arrian (and misguidedly interpreted as a manifesto of neutrality; 2.16.7), that they would accept neither Persian nor Greek into their city.

The second difficulty involved the significance and symbolism of the festival itself. The *Egersis*, held annually at the beginning of spring, celebrated the reawakening of Tyre's patron God, Herakles-Melqart, from his winter slumber, or death. It thus shared a common meme with the cults of Tammuz and Adonis, long familiar to the semitic cultures of the ancient Near East. A salient aspect of the *Egersis* was the identification, or rather incarnation, of the Divinity in the flesh of the *Egerseitēs*, or Resuscitator.⁶⁷ At the high point of the festival the Resuscitator engaged in ritual sex with his female counterpart, the priestess of Astarte-'Ashtoret, possibly his wife in real life.⁶⁸

Would Alexander have acted thus had he been allowed to participate? Impossible to know.⁶⁹ Yet one can easily understand the deep apprehension of Tyrian public opinion. Desecration of the festival's purity laws would have been bad enough. What would they do if the young haughty Macedonian, fresh from his astonishing victory over the King of Kings and claiming to be a descendant of Herakles, demanded also to take on fully all responsibilities of the *Egerseitēs*?⁷⁰ The implications were unthinkable. Better to keep him out altogether.

As we have seen, Alexander's first reaction to the Tyrian rebuff was an angry outburst, accompanied by threats to attack the city if it did not relent. Curtius ascribes this to Alexander's nature: he was generally unable to control his ire.⁷¹ surprise and anger are understandable: after all, this was the first time that Alexander's diplomacy of kinship failed to achieve positive results. But Curtius overstates his case. Realizing the immense difficulties he would have

to face, Alexander made another attempt to gain Tyrian acquiescence and reach a bloodless solution. He sent messengers to the city, in order to compel the Tyrians to make peace. These, however, were slain by the Tyrians, in blunt contravention of international law.⁷² Only then did Alexander finally make up his mind to besiege the city.

Nor was the army happy at the prospect of the siege. The technical difficulties were manifest to all and morale plummeted. At this point Alexander had a dream, whose contents he promptly made public. In his dream, he was leading the attack against the city when he saw Herakles standing on the wall, beckoning him with his right arm to advance; with Herakles as guide, clearing the way, he entered the city. Alexander's faithful court prophet, Aristandros of Telmessos, quickly provided an interpretation: the city would indeed be taken; yet just like the great feats of Herakles, it would take much pain and effort.⁷³

The story of the dream comes on good authority. In order to have any effect on troop morale, its contents had to be divulged to the soldiers.⁷⁴ It will thus have been heard by any number of the first-generation Alexander-historians, who were also eyewitnesses to the events. Furthermore, Aristandros, who himself appears in the story, wrote a book on the art of dream interpretation. This work was still accessible in the second century C.E., and may have been consulted by any of the surviving sources.⁷⁵ The story of Alexander's dream is fully historical.

Whether Alexander did in fact dream what he reported is a different question. Curtius is skeptical. Never reporting the act of dreaming in itself, he presents a wily Alexander who presumably makes up a story in order to encourage his men (4.2.17). Yet if we accept, with Curtius, that the soldiery was influenced by a felicitous dream of the King, taking literally the promise for divine help made to him in his sleep, why should we assume that such a dream will not have had the same effect—or greater—on the dreamer himself?⁷⁶

Arrian takes a different view. He says very naturally that “something Divine” helped convince Alexander to undertake the siege. Apparently, the young Macedonian still had his doubts, even after winning over his staff to the idea.⁷⁷ His approach is supported by the interpretation of Aristandros, which seems to be for Alexander's own sake as much as for anyone else's. The picture presented by Arrian is consistent with Alexander's behavior throughout. Alexander paid close attention to dreams and omens, and such a dream as he reported about Herakles is not unreasonable. There is no compelling reason to accept Curtius's cynical approach, when Arrian's earnest presentation fits the context just as well, and is highly congruent with the abundant evidence for Alexander's religiosity.

The following story may serve as illustration. After Alexander's

crossing of the Hellespont, the city of Lampsakos on the shores of the Hellespont came under suspicion of collaboration with the Persians. When Alexander threatened to punish them severely, the Lampsakenoi decided to send to him the historian Anaximenes, who had known both him and Philippos. When news of this reached Alexander, he swore by all the gods that he would do the exact opposite of what Anaximenes would ask of him. Whereupon Anaximenes, who somehow learned of this, requested that Alexander enslave the population, burn the city down and raze the temples. Compelled by his oath, Alexander was obliged to spare the city.⁷⁸ While the story may not represent actual events (Anaximenes' self-praise raises some misgivings), it takes for granted that Alexander took his oaths seriously enough to be susceptible to such subterfuge. It is thus a piece of contemporary evidence for Alexander's intense religious sentiment.

In fact, one can hardly exaggerate the importance of religion and myth to Alexander.⁷⁹ Attempts to rationalize each and every action bearing religious connotations, as underscoring and supporting some hidden (or not so hidden) agenda, will run into grave difficulties. To claim that Alexander made cynical use of sacrifices, omens, oracles and dreams throughout his career, is also to claim that he kept up an elaborate lifelong act, involving some of the most respectable oracles of the Greek world, a throng of professional seers, and innumerable sacrificial victims. According to his own journals, he was busy sacrificing to the Gods even during his fatal illness.⁸⁰ He seems to have done so in all earnestness.

Be that as it may, Alexander did not forget to honor Herakles in the aftermath of the Tyrian siege. Lavish sacrifices were followed by a procession of the troops under arms and a naval review. The soldiers competed in gymnastics in the temple precinct, and enjoyed a torch race. The Tyrian sacred flagship was consecrated to Herakles, as was the siege engine which had first breached the wall. Alexander added an inscription, perhaps of his own composition.⁸¹ Herakles was also honored as a merciful savior. The hardship and toil suffered by the Macedonians, as well as the futility of the entire confrontation, brought terrible punishment on the heads of the Tyrians. Thousands perished in the fighting, thousands more were sold into slavery. some two thousand were crucified along the shoreline.⁸² Amidst the indiscriminate slaughter one safe haven remained: Alexander had given orders in advance to spare the lives of any who sought shelter in the shrine of Herakles.⁸³ The city notables, king 'Azemilk and the Carthaginian envoys—all among the lucky survivors—now owed their life to Herakles and to his descendant, the city's new King and master.⁸⁴

The Egyptian chapters of the Greek and Latin Alexander-histories lie in the deep shadow of one famous episode: Alexander's visit to the oracle of Ammon at Siwah. Now, the takeover of Egypt itself was a strategic necessity, following up and complementing the conquest of the Levant. Not so the journey to Siwah. In this detour Alexander spent precious time on a purpose which had nothing to do with his military plans. The physical conditions of the journey even put him in personal danger, further jeopardizing the entire campaign.⁸⁵ One may well ask: what was the journey's purpose?

The search for an answer begins with Kallisthenes. The answer he gives is simple and straightforward: Alexander set out on this particular journey for the love of fame, knowing that both Perseus and Herakles had been there before him.⁸⁶ Kallisthenes was a contemporary and perhaps an eyewitness to the visit itself. His position as court historian allowed him access to Alexander's person. Therefore, his words carry much weight.⁸⁷

The argument is repeated by Arrian, who adds further detail. Alexander had two reasons for visiting Ammon: first, he wanted to consult the God, whose oracle was said to be a precise one and to have been consulted in the past by Perseus (on his mission to slay the Gorgon) and by Herakles (campaigning against Antaios and Bousiris). second, Alexander was in a state of ambitious rivalry with these Heroes, tracing his ancestry from both.⁸⁸ Further, Alexander himself claimed to be descended directly from Ammon, just as they were from Zeus.⁸⁹

Unlike Strabo, Arrian does not disclose his sources at this point. Theoretically, his information could be derived directly from Kallisthenes, Ptolemy, Aristoboulos, or from any combination of the three. For their part, Ptolemy and Aristoboulos, Arrian's usual sources, could either or both have followed Kallisthenes, produced an independent report, or may have omitted this detail altogether. What matters here is that Arrian used for his narrative a source coming from Alexander's close retinue. That source chose to mention the emulation of Herakles and Perseus as the motive for the visit to Ammon.⁹⁰ Yet there is more to the story. Until the Egyptian sands yield a papyrus holding a hitherto unknown bit of poetry or history dating from before the 330s, we shall never be able to tell with certainty whether the visits of Perseus and Herakles to Ammon had already formed a part of Myth, as known to Alexander and his comrades, or were a new addition by Kallisthenes (or some other creative mind in Alexander's camp). If the latter is true, some uncertainty must, perforce, remain.⁹¹ The connection of the two Heroes to the land of Egypt, at least, is well attested before Alexander.

During his visit in the town of Chemmis, in the Egyptian Thebaid, Herodotus (2.91) witnessed a local cult of a big-footed Perseus. This cult, he says, was unique to the inhabitants of Chemmis among all Egyptians. It is interesting to note that Herodotus did not think the Egyptian Perseus was a different Hero with the same name, despite his strange physical characteristic.

Perseus also had a Persian connection—at least in Greek eyes—as the very founder of the Persian nation.⁹² This bit of genealogy was highly relevant during a campaign against the Persian King. The memory of Perseus, brought up by Kallisthenes, will have pointed to Alexander's ancestral connections with the very kingdom he was now waging a war to capture. None of this is said outright in the surviving sources—what shape Kallisthenes' original story took, and what emphases it put on various aspects of the myths, we cannot know—but one should never underestimate the importance of myth to Greek historical consciousness. A story in Herodotus may serve as an example: still within living memory of the Persian wars, people in Hellas commonly thought that the Argives kept neutral because they believed themselves to be the forefathers of the Persian nation. To be sure, this was the message conveyed to them by a special messenger from King Xerxes. The Delphic oracle itself referred at one point to the Persian Perseid.⁹³ Obviously, the story still had currency in Herodotus's own time, a generation or two later. The addition of Perseus to the background of his grand adventure may be a sign of Alexander's propaganda attempts to present himself as a legitimate candidate for the Persian throne.⁹⁴ It has even been suggested that the identification of the Persian nation with Perseus was part of the “Persian diplomatic propaganda that presented the Persians to the Greeks of Europe as a kindred people.”⁹⁵ Myths are by no means immune to historical irony.

In comparison with Perseus, the presence of Herakles in Egypt will have been more obvious to Alexander and his contemporaries. From the Greek point of view, he was an integral part of the Egyptian Pantheon; his presence there was substantial.⁹⁶ Arrian (3.3.1) notes that Herakles consulted the oracle at siwah while on a mission to Libya against Antaios, and to Egypt against Bousiris. A look at the context of these missions in Diodorus (4.17.4–18.1) would be beneficial. His story does not give much detail about either Antaios or Bousiris. Antaios, so we read, was famous for his physical strength and his prowess as a wrestler, as well as for his habit of killing vanquished competitors; Herakles challenged him to a match, grappled with him and killed him. Bousiris was a king of the Egyptians who captured sojourners and sacrificed them, thus offending both Gods and men.⁹⁷ The rest of the story is dedicated to other achievements of Herakles

accomplished along the way. He took in hand Libya, which was full of wild animals, and opened it up to agriculture, namely to the typical Greek staples of vine and olive. One is reminded once again of Herakles' venerable role as importer of the olive to Greece.⁹⁸ “On the whole,” wrote Diodorus, “he reclaimed Libya, which had been mostly uninhabitable due to the wild beasts in the land, and made it second to none in good fortune. similarly, he killed the unlawful men and haughty dynasts and made the cities prosperous.” Herakles is presented as the spear-point in the process of civilization. He clears the land of obstacles and makes it habitable. In Egypt, after killing Bousiris, he founded a city, Hekatompylos, whose prosperity had reached almost to Diodorus's time.

To Alexander, following in the footsteps of his ancestor, this precedent was important and encouraging. Prosperous Hekatompylos served as prototype (at least on the symbolic level) for Alexandria, while Herakles' “opening up the land” transformed Alexander—as in the case of Perseus against the Persians—from a foreign conqueror to a legitimate heir reclaiming the legacy of his great ancestor.⁹⁹ That Egypt and Libya were no wild lands in Alexander's time is immaterial. If Alexander's forefather had freed the land and brought happiness to its cities, he himself had a stake in it.¹⁰⁰

Herakles had a venerable role in legitimizing foreign conquest and settlement. For example, the fascinating case of Dorieus, some 180 years before Alexander's conquest of Egypt, as told by Herodotus.¹⁰¹ An event after the failure of Dorieus's first colonization attempt in Libya is pertinent: he returned to the Peloponnese, where he received the advice of one Antichares of Eleon, given according to the oracles of Laios, to colonize Herakleia in sicily, “saying that all the land of Eryx belonged to the Herakleidai, since Herakles himself had acquired it.”¹⁰² so much from Herodotus. A much fuller version of the myth comes from Diodorus and Apollodoros: Eryx, a local king of semi-divine descent (much like Antaios) was in possession of a bull that had run away from Herakles' herd; he refused to give it up unless Herakles won a wrestling match (again, a striking similarity to the story of Antaios). The outcome of the fight was never in any doubt. Having disposed of the local king, Herakles turned the land over to its inhabitants and allowed them to enjoy its fruits until a day should come when one of his descendants reclaimed it.¹⁰³ Diodorus does not fail to make the connection with Dorieus.¹⁰⁴

To return to Alexander, the connection between his emulation of Perseus and Herakles and his status as son of a God is stated very clearly by Arrian. This reason in itself is sufficient to bring Alexander and the two Heroes together. Alexander, wishing to be recognized as son of Ammon, was following in the symbolic footsteps of his two

Heroic ancestors, who were also the sons of Zeus. We thus have a tradition of Zeus-Ammon founding Alexander's bloodline.¹⁰⁵

Yet Hero-emulation was not the sole reason for Alexander's desire to visit Ammon. According to Curtius, Arrian and Justin, Alexander intended to put before the oracle a question that had troubled him for some time: Who was his real father?¹⁰⁶ On the face of it, the answer was simple enough: Alexander's father was Philippos, King of Macedonia. But there was reason for doubt. shortly before Philippos's murder, he had married a young Macedonian noblewoman by the name of Kleopatra. During the wedding feast the bride's uncle (or brother) expressed his wish that Macedonia should receive from this wedlock a legitimate heir to the throne.¹⁰⁷ The implication was clear enough: Alexander was a bastard. The accusation was not taken lightly, nor in jest. Alexander was enraged and threw a cup at the offender. Then followed one of the famous Macedonian drunken brawls. Thanks to Philippos's advanced inebriation, this one ended up a comedy rather than a tragedy—when he tried to slay his estranged son, Philippos found he was too drunk to stand up straight. At the end of the day Alexander removed both himself and Olympias from the royal court.¹⁰⁸

According to one strand of the tradition, Attalos's allegations were not wholly without foundation. In fact, they find corroboration in the words of Olympias herself. According to Eratosthenes, as Alexander was making ready to set out on his campaign, Olympias told him in secret the true secret of his birth, and exhorted him to set for himself goals worthy of his origin.¹⁰⁹ According to Justin (11.11.35) Olympias had confessed to Philippos that Alexander was not actually begotten by him, but by a giant serpent. Philippos proceeded immediately to repudiate Alexander. How much of these stories is historical and how much romantic fabrication is hard to tell. Plutarch says that some anonymous authors claimed that even Olympias rejected them as invention by Alexander.¹¹⁰ Yet her very choice of words—"will Alexander not cease getting me into trouble with Hera?"—expose Alexander's thoughts: Was he really the son of Zeus?¹¹¹ The visit to siwah and the consultation with Ammon's oracle removed all doubt. Alexander was recognized as the God's son.

The oracular recognition of Alexander's Divine sonship was taken up immediately by Egyptian priestly protocol. According to the *Alexander-Romance* (1.34), Alexander was even enthroned as Pharaoh on his return from the visit to siwah and the foundation of Alexandria. The historicity of this account has recently come under attack, not unreasonably, given the general a-historical nature of the *Romance*.¹¹² One cannot be absolutely sure whether any particular detail of the

alleged coronation did in fact take place, or whether the story merely represents the traditional ceremonial procedures of Egypt, projected back to Alexander. Yet even the chief detractor of the coronation's historicity admits that "the priests responded as they had done before in the case of other foreign rulers, who similarly respected the essentials of Egyptian religion, by accepting Alexander as the *de facto* ruler of Egypt and creating a fictitious titulary for him, so as to maintain intact the succession of god-kings of Egypt, essential to cosmic survival."¹¹³ This statement is borne out by the evidence concerning Alexander's Egyptian titulary. A demotic papyrus from the third year of his reign styles him unambiguously as "Pharaoh," while hieroglyphic inscriptions from the temple of Amenhotep III at Luxor and from the grand temple at Karnak openly recognize him as the son of Ammon-Ra.¹¹⁴

The recognition of Alexander's Divine Sonship by the oracle of Ammon and by the priests of Memphis elevated Alexander to new heights in the mythological family tree. In fact, his new status as the son of Zeus-Ammon put him in the same rank as the greatest Heroes of Greek myth. The sixteen generations which had distanced him from the Olympian father of the Gods had now shrunk to none at all. Formerly a distant descendant of Herakles, Alexander had now become his full half-brother.¹¹⁵

SO FAR IN THE WEST

The relationship between Alexander and Herakles has undergone some major developments in the short interval between Alexander's accession and the occupation of Egypt. Certainly, Herakles was a prominent figure in the conceptual landscape of the Royal Macedonian house. In this capacity, he served as a rallying point in mobilizing the war against Persia; witness his use by Isokrates, and during the campaign itself—at the Danube, at the Hellespont and in Ilion. Yet at the same time the appeal to the myth of Herakles served also as a tool in diplomatic negotiation (successful or otherwise)—as in Thessaly, Megara and Kilikia.

This double role of Herakles—both agent of reconciliation and facilitator of conquest—is nowhere more evident than in the Tyrian affair. The initial contact between Tyre and Alexander was perfectly amicable, but Tyrian religious scruples soon plunged both sides into a viciously violent conflict. What would have happened if the Tyrians had shown more flexibility? One may conjecture that good relations would have persisted, and that the affinity of both sides to Herakles would have helped cement their fruitful collaboration. But that was not to be the case. The Tyrian rejection of his request to sacrifice on

the island left Alexander not only angry but also confused. Would he be right in waging war on the ancient city of his ancestral Hero? The dream of Herakles on the city wall removed this doubt. The Hero indicated his assent to the attack, and showed promise of victory. Yet when the city had finally fallen, Herakles' role was immediately reversed. His sacred precinct became a sanctuary from the rage of the Macedonian soldiers. He also served as the focal point for the celebrations in the early spring of 331. Tyre was not razed like Thebes. On the contrary, it received from Alexander a major festival, which no doubt helped considerably in repairing the damage of the long siege. Just like Alexander, Herakles was both an aggressor and a reconciler.

The close association of Alexander and Herakles becomes even clearer with the inauguration of his new coinage. As we have seen, Herakles is the most popular figure on Alexander's coins, appearing on both silver and bronze. since the decision to make such extensive use of Herakles could not have been reached without Alexander's approval, or even his initiative, it strongly testifies to the centrality of Herakles in Alexander's consciousness. Yet the coins may contain a deeper, further-reaching message. The silver tetradrachm—the dominant coin denomination of the new monetary system—displays the figures of Zeus and Herakles. To anyone who was even vaguely familiar with Greek myth this conjunction will have signified a father-and-son relationship. The legend next to the figure of Zeus reads

ΑΑΕΕΑΝΔΡΟΥ

—"of Alexander." Normally, the genitive "of" would be taken to refer to the coin itself. But given the wider context of the coin, may we not expect that at least some of its handlers will have taken "of Alexander" not only with "coin" but also with "Father"?¹¹⁶

The question of Divine sonship may well have been on Alexander's mind even before he issued his new coinage, possibly already in his childhood. It received a clear confirmation from Ammon's oracle at Siwah and from the priesthood at Memphis. In Egypt, at last, Alexander was officially recognized as a son of God. The importance of this recognition cannot be exaggerated. Although one cannot be sure of Alexander's plans at this stage, they were certainly without precedent in Greek history.¹¹⁷ so were his achievements, even at this early stage of his campaign. One can imagine the mounting responsibility and anxiety which they must have exerted, even on a man of such ferocious character and endless ambition. The knowledge that he was not merely a distant offspring of Zeus, but his very son, will have been a source of great comfort and spiritual uplift. We are told that Alexander consulted the oracle on his chances to become the master of all lands and all men.¹¹⁸ For lesser men such designs would

be both fanciful and hubristic. For him—his mother would certainly approve—they were a birthright.

In the Footsteps of Herakles

THE CAVE OF PROMETHEUS

In the winter of 330/329 Alexander crossed the Hindu Kush from southwest to northeast. Crossing the snow-clad mountains was a bitter experience and his men suffered badly. High altitude, thin and freezing air, blinding snow and lack of provisions all took their toll. This solitary landscape put the Macedonian army through all kinds of suffering. Many soldiers and camp-followers never came down the other side of the path. It was certainly one of the expedition's cruelest struggles against the elements.¹

somewhere in the middle of the mountain range the Macedonians reached a huge crag, some 1.8 km. in perimeter and more than 700 meters high. The local denizens, who had been terrified into cooperation by the army's unexpected appearance at their doorstep, told the strange visitors their traditional tale of the place. They also showed the Macedonians a cave, an eagle's aerie, and the marks of chains. Alexander and his men recognized the signs immediately: the rock was none other than the mythical prison of Prometheus; the eagle was Zeus's dreadful companion, slain by Herakles.²

The identification of this lonely eastern site as the prison of Prometheus aroused the anger of the famous third-century geographer, Eratosthenes of Kyrene. His argument, summarized by Strabo, is simple: since Prometheus was imprisoned on the Caucasus, and since there were some 30,000 *stadia* between the Caucasus and Alexander's location at the time, the story is surely a fabrication.³ A motive was found easily enough: some writers, motivated by flattery rather than by truth, transferred the Caucasus to India, thinking thereby to glorify Alexander.⁴ However, these fawners were guilty not

only of willful fabrication and complete disregard for the truth, but also of bad judgment: "...although it was a more glorious thing for Alexander to subdue Asia as far as the Indian mountains than merely to the recess of the Euxine and to the Caucasus, yet the glory of the mountain, and its name, and the belief that Jason and his followers had accomplished the longest of all expeditions, reaching as far as the neighborhood of the Caucasus, and the tradition that Prometheus was bound at the ends of the earth on the Caucasus, led writers to suppose that they would be doing the king a favor if they transferred the name Caucasus to India."⁵ The Flatterers, so said Eratosthenes, did Alexander a bad service: wishing to connect his campaign with a famous myth, they minimized his real achievements.

One can understand the geographer's ire. Drawing a faithful picture of the world was hard enough without this kind of nonsense. His explanation, however, suffers from a serious misconception. To be sure, the fact that Prometheus had been imprisoned on the Caucasus was common knowledge.⁶ But can we assume, with Eratosthenes, that the flatterers knew exactly where they were at the time, or at least that they were aware of the great distance between the real and the false Caucasus?⁷ Did Alexander and his staff, let alone the rank and file, have that firm a grip on the geography of the lands through which they were marching? The classic example showing the exact opposite is Strabo 15.1.25, relying on Nearchos: "But Alexander, seeing crocodiles in the Hydaspes and Egyptian beans in the Akesines, thought he had found the sources of the Nile, and prepared an expedition to Egypt, thinking to sail all the way there on that river." There was no one in a better position to know Alexander's naval plans than Nearchos, the captain of Alexander's fleet. The same notion appears in a letter from Alexander to Olympias, reported by Arrian (6.1.25). In that letter Alexander claims to have found the sources of the Nile in India, having spent some time in the area, at that! When it was realized that the Indus flowed directly into the ocean, the letter had to be revised.

This impression of geographical confusion is corroborated by Arrian's story of the negotiations between Alexander and Pharasmanes, king of Chorasmia.⁸ The latter suggested to Alexander a joint venture against the Amazons of Kolchis. Alexander, who seems to have believed that a march from Bactria to the shores of the Black sea—beyond the "real" Caucasus—was no great affair, declined the king's offer, not because the distance was too great or the endeavor too dangerous, but because his immediate interests lay in the other direction, in India. Furthermore, in the narratives of Diodorus and Curtius, written centuries after Alexander's campaign, the Hindu Kush lies in the extreme north.⁹ Both authors knew that there were many

lands to the north of the Hindu Kush—they wrote about them in their own works. Curtius could even write about the wind blowing from the Pontic sea and whirling up the sands of Baktria.¹⁰ It strains the imagination to try and draw a map of what the world must have looked like to Alexander and his men. One can hardly escape the impression that the gargantuan scale of the conquests had completely shaken their geographical perception.¹¹

There is thus no particular reason to doubt that Alexander and his men actually did hear a story, which reminded them in some way of Prometheus, Herakles and the eagle. Unfortunately, none of the surviving sources gives any details concerning the local tale. It is quite probable that none of the primary Alexander-histories did either—the actual story will likely have been swallowed up by the *interpretatio Graeca*. We are thus left to guess what that story may have been like, and to try and locate it within its proper context.

It has been suggested that the bird in the story was inspired by, or somehow related to, the mythical saena-simurgh of Iranian mythology.¹² This bird, normally portrayed as a humongous eagle or falcon, has an ambivalent nature, both benevolent and malignant.¹³ In that, and other respects, it shows a memetic resemblance to the giant avian of ancient Mesopotamian mythology, Anzu.¹⁴ In its Mesopotamian manifestation the mythical giant bird was slain by the God Ninurta—an Assyrian deity who inspired the biblical and *midrashic* Nimrod, and a close parallel of the Greek Herakles.¹⁵ Like Herakles, among whose enemies we find the Nemean lion and the Hydra, Ninurta conducted a series of battles against various monsters, including a famous lion and a seven-headed serpent. In his most famous battle—against the evil Anzu—he even used poisoned arrows.

Another mythological figure thrown into the mix by modern scholars is Verethragna, the Iranian deity of victory.¹⁶ This figure, too, displays many Herakles-like traits.¹⁷ To begin, he is the God of victory, easily identifiable with Herakles *Kallinikos*. Not merely an invincible warrior-god, he is also the champion of righteousness against evil, fighting against evil men, divinities and monsters. Under his Indian name of Indra (probably going back to early Aryan roots) he is also a dragon-slayer. Verethragna was also the patron of wayfarers and the protector of houses. In times of danger, it was he who was generally invoked.¹⁸ Small wonder, then, that from the Hellenistic period down to sassanian times Verethragna and Herakles had been identified, conflated and syncretized.¹⁹ To confuse things further, Verethragna could manifest himself as various animals. One of these was a giant predatory bird.²⁰

The original tale heard by Alexander and his men is now

irretrievably lost. However, an idea of its possible outline may be gleaned from a later recurrence of the theme in the most unexpected of sources. In the year 399 c.E., a traveler by the name of Fa Hian, driven by desire to obtain Buddhist books unattainable in his native China and to visit the holy places of Buddhism, set out from the city of Chang'an and turned West.²¹ He recounted his adventures in a travel book. In chapter 29 he wrote, "Entering the valley and striking the mountains towards the south-east, ascending 15 *li* we arrive at the hill called Gīdhrakūṭa. Three *li* from the top is a stone cavern facing the south. Buddha used in this place to sit in meditation. Thirty paces to the north-west is another stone cell in which Ênanda practiced meditation. The *Dêva* Mâra Piśuna, having assumed the form of a vulture, took his place before the cavern and terrified Ênanda. Buddha by his spiritual power pierced the rock, and with his outstretched hand patted Ênanda's shoulder. On this his fear was allayed. The traces of the bird and of the hand-hole are still quite plain; on this account the hill is called 'The Hill of the Vulture Cave.'"²² Another Chinese pilgrim, Hieun Tsiang, visited the cave in the first half of the seventh century c.E., and told much the same story. He added, "Although years and months have elapsed since then, yet the bird traces on the stone and the hole in the rock still remain."²³

The similarities between the Buddhist tale and the Prometheus myth are striking. Both stories present a solitary male figure living on a rock. These figures are both molested by an avian adversary. In both cases a third, Heroic, party intervenes, and dispels the danger. Most tellingly, both stories are substantiated by physical remains. Both Alexander and the Chinese pilgrims are shown the remains of the great bird's nest. The marks of the chains which had bound Prometheus resonate with the hand-hole created by Buddha. These two are separated by a great interval of both space and time,²⁴ yet the replicated memes in both myths indicate that the Chinese monks heard a later development of the same story heard by the Macedonians in 330/329 B.c.—a story which could not but remind them of Prometheus.

It thus appears that the process whereby the Caucasus was identified with the Hindu Kush was the reverse of that envisioned by Eratosthenes. Traveling in the wildest, harshest terrain they had ever met—and, as far as mountains go, ever would meet—the Macedonians came to a cavern where they saw the aerie of a huge bird and signs of a chain. This surely felt like the end of the world. The local inhabitants told them a story, which sounded astonishingly familiar. The desire to see in this lonesome site the place of Prometheus's torment is touching, and all too understandable. It put some order back into their hopelessly confused world. Herakles had passed

through these mountains before; once again they were in familiar territory.²⁵

“Myth opens up colonial territory in more ways than one. In a way, any myth with an attachment to the soil of the settlement forges some connection with it. some myths, without constituting explicit charters, none the less function as opening myths through both their content and their localization.”²⁶ With the discovery of Prometheus's cave on Mt. Caucasus Alexander and his men entered a new realm. It now became evident that the campaign trailed in the footsteps of the great ancestor of the Macedonian royal house not only in the sands of Africa, but also through the mountains of deep Asia. Herakles had been to the Caucasus before them, and opened up the land.

There is more. Let us return to sicily for a brief moment, to Dorieus and his fellow settlers.²⁷ For them, the previous conquest by Herakles was to be a moral compass in the dark days ahead (one could hardly expect the process of colonization to be free from anxiety and danger). The example of Herakles was exalted; the Hero was someone to look up to. With Alexander the picture was more complex. On the one hand, Herakles was an awesome ancestor of the Macedonian King. Yet on the other, if by traveling to the Caucasus to free Prometheus Herakles had reached the farthest recesses of the world,²⁸ then Alexander immediately surpassed him! The Caucasus was merely an obstacle which Alexander had to pass on the way to capture Bessos, and his road stretched long ahead still.

THE SIGNPOST OF DIONYSOS

some months after the discovery of Prometheus's cave in the Caucasus, in the summer or fall of 329, Alexander found himself on the banks of the Iaxartes, or as he thought, the Tanais (our Don), dividing Europe from Asia.²⁹ On the opposite bank of the river camped a skythian army, which Alexander intended to attack. These skythians had never before been subdued. Alexander's soothsayer, Aristandros, was consulted concerning the river crossing, a consultation which yielded adverse omens. Alexander was aware of the magnitude of the situation. Would he try his force against the enemy that had made a laughing-stock of Darius, the father of Xerxes, and had destroyed the great Cyrus?³⁰ If so, it was an opportunity to outshine the two greatest Kings of Persia, but there also loomed the danger of a similar disaster. As usual, the crossing was successful and the skythian force was routed. During the chase Alexander found that he had outstripped someone greater than the Great Kings.

In bad physical condition, due to drinking some bad water, Alexander ordered his men to follow the fugitives until dark. He

himself returned to camp, but the soldiers, before turning back, “had already crossed the limits of *Pater Liber* [that is, Dionysos], whose monuments were stones placed in frequent intervals, and tall trees, their boles covered with ivy.”³¹ This was a momentous event for the soldiers as well as their leader. One cannot simply brush it aside by putting one's tongue in one's cheek.³² During the pursuit the soldiers saw ivy-wreathed trees. According to Theophrastos, a near-contemporary, ivy did not grow in Asia more than five days' march east of the Levantine coast, except for Media and India, around Mt. Meros.³³ Media was now well behind them (we hear nothing of ivy during the Hyrkanian campaign), whereas India and Mt. Meros still lay in their future. Euripides, too, had sung about Dionysos's travels in Baktria and Media.³⁴ We should not wonder that the Macedonian soldiers came to realize that the God Dionysos had visited the place before them. Apparently, they also saw some kind of monument there, a pillar or a series of milestones (or both).³⁵ The conclusion that this was a boundary set by Dionysos—Baktria was the furthest east he had reached, according to Euripides—was a natural one.

This historical incident in the life of Alexander soon became the kernel of a nascent myth, as related by Pliny the Elder:³⁶

Beyond [the river Ochus] are the sogdiani and the town Panda; on their farthest borders is Alexandria, a foundation by Alexander the Great. There are altars there, set up by Hercules and *Pater Liber*, likewise by Cyrus, semiramis and Alexander. That is the limit of all their campaigns in this part of the world. They were stopped by the river Iaxartes, which the skythians call silis and which Alexander and his soldiers thought to be the Tanais. Demodamas, the general of the Kings seleukos and Antiochos, whom mostly we follow here, crossed that river and set up altars to Apollo of Didyma.

The two Kings are, without doubt, seleukos I and his son Antiochos I.³⁷ Thus, a generation after Alexander we already find a new layer added to the myth. In this new layer Alexander and his predecessors are shut in by the Iaxartes, and the new person on the stage, Demodamas, wins the coveted distinction: first man across the river.³⁸

Demodamas's effort to expropriate that distinction to himself—especially when this meant pushing Alexander aside—teaches us much about the perceived importance of his achievement, and at the same time about the significance of these ‘limits of Dionysos’ for Alexander. The Iaxartes was a boundary of the recognized world.³⁹ Beyond the river lay Wilderland, which even Dionysos did not penetrate far. The first to win the distinction of crossing it would also win world renown. Alexander here had an opportunity to surpass a God. What was intimated with the discovery of Prometheus's cave had now become

manifest. Alexander passed beyond the bounds of the world known to Myth.

SOME UNCERTAIN EPISODES

The following year (329/8–328/7) saw a number of incidents with Heraklean flavor. The first instance where Heraklean influence may perhaps be detected is the punishment of Bessos. We read that before handing the regicide over to Darius's brother, Alexander had his nose and earlobes cut off—a traditional method of punishment in Persia and Media.⁴⁰ From Arrian it evoked righteous indignation and a sharp rebuke of Alexander's lapse into barbaric behavior, most unbecoming a Heraklid. Yet nose-cutting had a quite relevant precedent in Greece: shortly after Amphitryon and his family had arrived in Thebes, the young Herakles decided to end the subjection of his new fatherland to the Minyan king Erginos. When the latter's envoys came demanding taxes, Herakles cut off their noses and discharged them with a message of refusal. Pausanias testifies that, down to his own day, when one set out from Thebes through the Neïstan gate, one reached a statue of Herakles “Nose-Cutter.”⁴¹

The second scene takes place on the banks of the river Oxus (Amu-Darya). According to Curtius, this fast-running, ever-turbulent river carried much silt, and its muddy waters were quite unhealthy. In search for drinking water, the soldiers dug wells around the campsite, finding nothing at first. Eventually, a spring was noticed—in the King's tent, no less. Wishing to avoid an accusation of tardiness, the excavators claimed that the water had suddenly sprung forth in a hitherto dry spot. This was reported to Alexander, who bought the story, and immediately started advertising the event as a gift from the Gods.⁴² Plutarch and Arrian tell the story somewhat differently. According to their accounts, the well was discovered “not far from the tent of Alexander” but, far from drinking water, it contained oil.⁴³

In all three versions, the sudden appearance of the well (or wells) is taken as a portent. Curtius, cynical as ever, describes how a perfectly mundane discovery of drinking water was presented as a token of aid sent by the Gods to the thirsty army. Plutarch and Arrian are rather more impressed by the oil well. Both relate that the discovery was referred to the prophets accompanying the army—Arrian specifically names Aristandros of Telmessos—who interpreted the phenomenon as portending victory after much toil. Remarkably, a similar prediction was given by the same Aristandros in response to Alexander's Herakles dream on the eve of the Tyrian siege. It would not be surprising if Alexander, too, realized this similarity.⁴⁴

Herakles, one recalls, was an expert in finding water.⁴⁵ In an

episode told by Diodorus (4.23.1), some nymphs cause warm springs to erupt in order to celebrate his landing in Sicily on the way to Eryx. The connection of Herakles and hot springs was an old one. Ibykos, a sixth-century B.C. poet, told how “Hephaistos sent up baths of hot waters as a gift to Herakles.” A precinct of Herakles was situated also next to the famous hot-water springs of Thermopylai.⁴⁶ The appearance of the water well may have reminded Alexander and his comrades of Herakles. To be sure, Kleon the Sicilian, a court poet who was to play an important part in Curtius's version of the *proskynesis* affair,⁴⁷ was likely to be familiar with the Sicilian myths we find in Diodorus, and could certainly convey the message to Alexander.⁴⁸

Later in the same year, shortly after the capture of Ariamazes' Rock, Alexander and his army arrived at a huge game park.⁴⁹ The King entered the reserve with his entire army, and then ordered the animals to be hunted down from every quarter. Four thousand wild beasts were annihilated that day. *Alexander slew a lion with one stroke.* He then proceeded to picnic with his troops in the park. The enormity of the slaughter made a great impression; it even appears on Diodorus's list of contents for book 17. What was it that drove Alexander to annihilate the reserve, which had previously not been touched for four generations? surely, a recreational hunter would have preserved some game for future visits.

The reason may lie in Alexander's self-identification with Herakles. The Hero had a life-long struggle, even enmity, with all kinds of wild beasts. In fact, one of his typical roles as Hero was clearing from the land the menaces presented by wild beasts and monsters, on both land and sea. To give one example:⁵⁰

Before his departure [from Crete] he was magnificently honored by the natives, and wishing to show his gratitude to the Cretans he cleansed the island of the wild beasts which infested it. And this is the reason why in later times not a single wild animal, such as a bear, or wolf, or serpent, or any similar beast, was to be found on the island. [...] And the myths relate that he hated every kind of wild beast and lawless men and warred upon them because of the fact that it had been his lot that while yet an infant the serpents made an attempt on his life...

Thus, the decision to replace recreational hunting with a complete obliteration of the reserve's wildlife population may have had something to do with Alexander's emulation of Herakles.

The killing of lions had a specifically Heraklean connotation. The slaying of the Nemean lion was one of Herakles' trademarks. Its hide became his main garb and long-lasting symbol. Nearly a century before Alexander's time, a champion pankratiast by the name of Poulydamas slew a lion with his bare hands on Mt. Olympus. This was

a specimen of the Thracian lion, a breed which gave northern Greece much trouble, and even attacked the camels of Xerxes' huge army.⁵¹ "To this exploit [Poulydamas] was impelled by an ambition to rival the labors of Herakles, because Herakles also, the legend says, overthrew the lion of Nemea." This and other deeds of Heroic ability and mentality, performed by this athlete, were commemorated by art and inscription in Olympia.⁵² Alexander, it is true, never opposed a lion empty-handed, but according to Curtius (8.1.16) he once slew one with a single wound. In this instance the soldiers, who were alarmed by the dangers their King was taking, voted that he be forbidden to hunt on foot or without a close retinue.

Killing a lion was a Heroic status symbol. Lysimachos, who on this occasion tried to help his King and was pushed to the side, had done so in Syria. Curtius (*ibid.*) thought that this was the origin of the story of how Alexander had caged Lysimachos with a lion, and how the latter overcame the beast. This story circulated widely and Lysimachos prided himself on the wounds he received in the incident.⁵³ Perdikkas, too, entered a cave which was the lair of a lioness, and wrested her cubs away from her.⁵⁴ Many centuries later, in the reign of Commodus, an Emessan notable by the name of Julius Alexander was accused of treason merely because he had killed a lion from horseback. Commodus himself was styled "Hercules" after killing some wild beasts in an amphitheater at Lanuvium.⁵⁵

Now, it must be admitted that the name of Herakles does not appear anywhere in connection with these three episodes. One is certainly free to doubt whether such a connection should be made at all. Yet the circumstances point in that direction, as does the fact that Herakles was ever on the mind of Alexander and his courtiers. The nose-cutting incident reminded Arrian of Herakles, and as we have seen, is connected with a branch of the Herakles tradition. The spring of water which appeared in the King's tent was celebrated as a divine omen, reminiscent of other branches of the Herakles myth. The oil well episode teaches a lesson familiar from all versions of the Herakles cycle—that great victories come at the cost of great effort. Finally, the extravagant hunt will not have failed to excite the imaginations of all who participated, and lion-slaying was undoubtedly a Heraklean *forte*. Unless new sources appear, it would be impossible to prove positively that any allusions to Herakles were made in relation to any of these incidents. But we should also remember that Herakles was a constant companion on the campaign, not least in its Baktrian stage, as we shall see presently in the story of Kleitos's murder and in the *proskynesis* affair.⁵⁶

Herakles plays a small but crucial role in the events leading to the murder of Kleitos.⁵⁷ The inauspicious day began with a sacrifice by Alexander to Kastor and Polydeukes. The sacrifice was followed by a prolonged banquet with much wine, where the conversation turned to the fatherhood of the Dioskouroi. (Contrary to Arrian's allegations, heavy drinking in the Macedonian court was hardly an innovation introduced by Alexander.) seeing that the sacrifice was somewhat unusual, especially on a day consecrated to Dionysos (§2), discussion of the twin Heroes seems neither strange nor alarming. But the relevance of the topic will not have been missed, for it closely involved Alexander. He, too, ascribed his birth to a God—Ammon, also recognized as Zeus. some flatterers added that the achievements of the Twins were a trifle, compared to those of Alexander. Others did not abstain from adding Herakles' name to the fray. Was Alexander on his way to outshine Herakles, just as he had eclipsed the Dioskouroi?

According to Arrian, it was at this point that Kleitos lost his patience. He had long disliked Alexander's change into barbaric ways and was unhappy with the transformation of his King, and yet he suffered silently. But enough was enough; he could not abide idly when the Divine came under attack.⁵⁸ some in Alexander's court—men of no mean importance, they were guests at the King's banquet—felt sure enough to make the claim that his deeds had surpassed those of the most illustrious Hero of Greece; a Hero who, as none needed reminding, had become a God for his efforts. The theological implication was inescapable: Alexander was even more deserving of divinity than Herakles! That was an innovation indeed.

Curtius and Plutarch give different accounts of the specific events that led to the deterioration of this fatal symposium.⁵⁹ According to Curtius, Alexander's belittling the achievements of Philippos drew a caustic remark from Kleitos, a remark which, unfortunately, was overheard by the King. In Plutarch the trouble starts over the verses of one Pranichos, a court poet, deriding some Macedonian officers who had suffered a recent disaster.⁶⁰ Kleitos came to their defense, thereby angering Alexander, who was quite happy with the verses. Which account is closest to the actual events is hard to tell. In favor of Arrian's story we can say that Ptolemy, most likely his source for the incident, was present at the banquet.⁶¹ Ptolemy is also the only source we can name with any degree of certainty. At least, if not closest to the actual words spoken at the banquet, he is a faithful representative of the kind of discourse one could expect at Alexander's court at that time.

Whatever remark or topic of conversation was responsible for the first sour notes, things turned very bad, very fast. The quarrel between Alexander and Kleitos became violent, and despite the efforts of many

of the guests (variously narrated by our sources), the banquet ended with Alexander's impaling Kleitos with a *sarissa*— the Macedonian long pike. On one detail our sources are in complete agreement: immediately after the murder Alexander was seized by uncontrollable anguish at his deed.⁶² Both Curtius and Arrian say that Alexander tried to kill himself and was prevented by his bodyguards, and that he later shut himself up in his tent and refused both food and drink. It is tragically ironic that the quarrel, which may have started about the comparison of Alexander and Herakles, caused a violent reaction in Alexander, so like Herakles in character.

The murder of Kleitos brings to mind a number of episodes in the life of Herakles. The first is the killing of Linos, who tried to teach young Herakles how to play the *kithara*. The boy was too slow to grasp the lessons, and Linos struck him in frustration, a fatal mistake, for Herakles beat him to death with the instrument.⁶³ A second famous episode is Herakles' madness and the killing of his wife, Megara, and their three children, as told in the famous play of Euripides.⁶⁴ The story is well known, and was very familiar to Alexander and members of his court—men who knew Euripides by heart.⁶⁵ Alexander's first reaction after the slaying of Kleitos, so we read, was an attempt to kill himself in shame—the very same action taken by Herakles upon realizing the atrociousness of his actions.⁶⁶ Alexander's bodyguards prevented him from committing suicide, and the King then shut himself up and refused to see anyone, eat or drink; once more, much like Euripides' Herakles.⁶⁷ Eventually Alexander was consoled, not least by ascribing the murder to the wrath of Dionysos, thus casting blame from himself.⁶⁸ The horrible crimes of Herakles are described by Euripides' chorus as a “dance of Dionysos.”⁶⁹

Another memorable incident is Herakles' obnoxious drunkenness in the house of Admetos, told in Euripides' *Alkestis*. In this story, Herakles arrived as a guest in the house of Admetos. He came at a bad time: the master of the house was in mourning for his wife, Alkestis, the only person willing to replace him in death. Herakles, who inquired about the wailing, was told that it was a foreign woman who had died, no one of consequence. He therefore entered about of heavy drinking, and disturbed the entire household with his wild carousing. Upon learning the truth—and this is the important point—he became filled with shame and regret. so much so, that he went knocking on Death's door in order to return Alkestis to her home.

Like Herakles, Alexander was quick to show regret for his atrocious behavior, a fact for which he was commended by Arrian. The remorse Alexander showed for offenses and misdeeds was a unique phenomenon, wrote Arrian. To him, that was the one redeeming quality which allowed him to retain his admiration of the Macedonian

King, despite many unsavory episodes in Alexander's career.⁷⁰ Herakles, too, was unique in this way. One can hardly find another Hero of Greek myth who had sinned against so many—Gods and mortals alike—and yet was forgiven in the end for all his transgressions and won divine status and a happy existence in the Hereafter. There is a strong probability that the murder of Kleitos, as well as the strong feelings it aroused, provided much fuel for Alexander's self-identification with Herakles.⁷¹ Like his Hero, he suffered long from the memory of his sin.⁷²

PROSKYNESIS

The Herakles theme is taken up again in the *proskynesis* affair. Much has been written and said about Alexander's attempt to introduce the Persian custom of prostration or obeisance (*proskynesis*) into his court-protocol, and touching even on the important points would be beyond the scope of this work. Two assertions must be made, however, which are important to my interpretation of the sources: first, the two accounts of an attempt to introduce the custom of *proskynesis* in Alexander's court are not mutually exclusive. I suggest that the events described did indeed take place on two different occasions.⁷³ second, the banquet described by Arrian and Curtius must be taken as historical, and while the shape of the speeches and some of their contents are surely independent contributions by the later writers, something of the general tenor of the original confrontation has survived. One such remnant of the actual arguments for and against *proskynesis* is the comparison of Herakles and Dionysos with Alexander.

In Curtius's narrative Herakles and Dionysos (Hercules and *Pater Liber*, as they were known to the Latin-reading audience) appear on both sides of the discussion. The sicilian poet Kleon, who is the representative speaker for *proskynesis*, argued that even the two Gods had first to overcome the jealousy of their contemporaries in order to become deities, because it is the reputation one gains in one's own time that dictates the opinion of posterity.⁷⁴ This was not the first time Kleon had harped on that particular issue. Together with Agis the Argive, yet another court poet, he bandied around the idea that Herakles, Dionysus and the Dioskouroi would willingly make room for Alexander as a new deity.⁷⁵ Kallisthenes, speaking against Kleon, did not consider this comparison irrelevant (apparently, the notion was quite fashionable in Alexander's court). He merely turned the argument on its head, claiming that the mortal bodies of the two had to be removed before they could become Gods.⁷⁶

In Arrian (4.10.6) the picture is more subtle. Anaxarchos, who plays

the role assigned by Curtius to Kleon, said it was not due so much to the greatness of Alexander's deeds in comparison with Herakles and Dionysos that he was deserving of divine status, but because as a Macedonian he was much more relevant to his subjects than Dionysos the Theban or Herakles the Argive. Kallisthenes, for his part, used Anaxarchos's argument against him, saying that the descendants of Herakles had come from Argos to Macedonia to rule lawfully, not as tyrants.⁷⁷

It is hard to know how much of these arguments goes back to Alexander's court and to the specific banquet described by Curtius and Arrian. To be sure, the reasoning for and against *proskynesis* differs considerably between the two surviving versions. Yet this very difference implies that Herakles and Dionysos did in fact play an important role in the primary sources. In both Arrian and Curtius the argumentation involves the two divinities. The arguments themselves, however, are very different. since there is no reason to suppose that Arrian wrote his account in response to that of Curtius, the explanation of their particular choices must be that their sources—written mostly by contemporaries, sometimes by eyewitnesses—did the same. surely, the comparison of Alexander with Herakles and Dionysos in this context is a historical event.

However, one decisive argument in favor of *proskynesis* is missing from the discussion. One might expect, following the allegations made by some courtiers that Alexander's deeds were greater than those of Herakles, a return to that theme: if Herakles was rewarded for his achievements with divinity, all the more so Alexander. Yet Anaxarchos (in Arrian's account) seems to be drawing away from that very point, emphasizing rather the Macedonian origins of the King and the foreign extraction of the two recognized Gods.⁷⁸ One possible conclusion would be that Alexander had learned his lesson from his tragic confrontation with Kleitos, and made clear to his minions that the two Gods should not be slighted. Alexander did march beyond the Caucasus (the site of the easternmost adventure of Herakles, or so it seemed at the time), and his men did pass the boundaries set by Dionysos beyond the Tanais, but the time was not yet ripe for him to surpass the two Gods publicly.

The Passage to India

THIRDS ON OF ZEUS

In late spring or early summer of 327 Alexander once more crossed the Hindu Kush—his Caucasus—and passed into India. His first stop was in the recent foundation, Alexandria in Paropamisadaï, where he tarried for long months.¹ At this point he was met by a number of kinglets from the neighborhood. They showed great delight at his arrival, and congratulated him as the third son of Zeus who had come to visit them. Unlike his two predecessors, Dionysos and Herakles, known to them only from legend, he was there in person, to be seen and obeyed.²

The implications of their claim were far-reaching. As we have seen, the presence of Dionysos and Herakles in India was of paramount importance to Alexander and to many of the people around him. If any part of Greek mythology prior to Alexander had told of their journeys to this distant and wondrous land, it has not reached us.³ Herakles freed Prometheus from his shackles somewhere on the Hindu Kush, but for Alexander that was a recent discovery. Dionysos had visited Baktria, as everyone knew from Euripides, but the playwright never suggested that the God had visited India as well. It was thus crucial for the mythical perception of Alexander's expedition that the earlier presence of other sons of Zeus was recognized so soon, and so clearly.

Yet to the modern reader, the allegations made by members of this reception committee may seem surprising. Certainly, they raise some difficult questions. For example: Where did the Indian rulers obtain this kind of exact information about Greek mythology in general and about Alexander's affinities and preferences in particular? Why did

they choose to act out this display of piety, when they had every reason to suppose that surrender and cooperation would be enough to ensure Alexander's goodwill? so daunting are these questions that most of the standard modern Alexander-histories leave out the incident altogether.⁴

Answers to these questions have been sought in the intricate interaction created by the meeting of the conqueror Hellenes and conquered Indians.⁵ Alexander and his men saw the East through a Hellenic looking glass. Political institutions, geography, fauna and flora, were all examined and categorized according to the doctrines of Greek knowledge and experience. Religion, too, came under the same umbrella. Local eastern potentates did their best to take advantage of this Greek mindset, and quickly learned to produce stories that would give them an edge over the otherwise nigh-invincible Hellenes. The Chorasmian king Pharasmanes may serve as an example. Wishing to divert Alexander's energy against his own private enemies, and perceiving Macedonian preoccupation with female warriors, he suggested to Alexander that he march west and subdue the Amazons.⁶ This story attests to the interest of the locals in the mindset of the foreign invaders, and to their willingness to exploit this mindset in pursuit of their own agenda. "If the Macedonians wanted Amazons, then Pharasmanes would supply them in abundance. The price was military action to promote his own interests."⁷

The same phenomenon repeated itself in India, with greater intensity and with two added factors. The first is the need for an ever-longer relay of interpreters. However proficient, the interpreters could not but alter both the meaning and the tenor of what was being said. The classic example is Onesikritos's conversation with the Indian sage Mandamis (*alias* Dandamis). The Indian is said to have thought it impossible to relate any of his wisdom to the King while "conversing through three interpreters [...] for that would be like expecting water to flow pure through mud."⁸ We can only assume that the last link on the Greek side of the chain used Greek terms to make itself clear to its Greek-speaking audience. To be sure, the names of Alexander's two predecessors have come down to us as "Pater Liber" and "Hercules," rather than "Dionysos" and "Herakles". Curtius and the Metz epitomator, writing for a Latin audience, thus become a fourth link in the chain of interpreters and demonstrate the same principle in action.

The second factor is the cooperation, intentional or otherwise, between Alexander's staff, who "conveniently reinterpreted local legends and integrated them into Greek mythology," and the native peoples, who "supplied information which they thought would attract the interest and approval of their conquerors."⁹ The famous episode in Nysa, where Alexander and his men were overjoyed to find ivy, sacred

to Dionysos, growing on Mt. Meros, is explained in these terms: Indian emissaries, who had arrived in Alexander's court in Baktria, acted also as spies. They were present in court at the time of the ill-omened banquet where Kleitos found his doom, and they paid close attention to the debate on the question of *proskynesis*. Thus, when Alexander finally arrived in the vicinity of Nysa, they first offered brief, halfhearted resistance, and then appealed to Alexander for mercy, citing as reason the foundation of their city by Dionysos. "The inhabitants of Nysa were obviously well briefed about the beliefs of the invaders, and rectified the error of their resistance by a clever appeal to Alexander's vanity."¹⁰ The same was true for the reception in the Kabul (in Greek, Kophen) valley. The Indian envoys who had visited Alexander's court "were aware of the Greek penchant for religious syncretism, conscious of the desirability of equivalents within their own pantheon, and they produced a tradition of the presence of Greek deities, notably Dionysos and Heracles, whom the king was known to emulate."¹¹

This explanation goes a long way, but merits further discussion. First, we should exercise caution when speculating about the actions and motivations of Alexander's staff. The sources give no hint of any organized group of people whose role it was to interpret or invent myths in order to facilitate Alexander's relentless advance. The members of this alleged group have not been identified. Were they the bodyguards, the troupe of poets and philosophers who accompanied the court, or perhaps Alexander's equivalent of military intelligence?¹² Different people will have had different agendas, and it is always dangerous to generalize.

second, what of Alexander himself ? What will have been his attitude towards these "convenient reinterpretations"? Arrian's version (5.2.1) of the Nysa story sheds some light. Having listened to the Nysaian dynast Akouphis:

Alexander, hearing all these things, found them to his heart's liking, and he wished the myths of the wandering of Dionysos to be true. He also wished so concerning the foundation of Nysa by Dionysos, since he had now already reached where Dionysos had, and would go beyond Dionysos. Nor would the Macedonians now refuse to take part with him in the labors ahead, thanks to the zeal for Dionysos' deeds.

We have here a double motive for Alexander to accept the claims of Akouphis: first, it was important to him personally to know that he was following the path of Dionysos, and that he would have an opportunity to surpass the God. second, there were problems with troop morale, and the King was certain that this knowledge would provide a source of encouragement to the troops as well.¹³ No doubt, Arrian was skeptical about the entire story, but we should be careful

not to project his skepticism back onto Alexander. For him the story was not “intrinsically implausible,” it was merely surprising.¹⁴

To understand this incident better we ought to focus on its political reality. The entreaty by Akouphis had a double purpose: to make up for the mistake of attempting resistance, and to try and preserve whatever rights he could for the city.¹⁵ The mention of Dionysos was welcome to Alexander, but that did not necessitate the benefactions he heaped on the city. These were unprecedented indeed for a city that had initially offered resistance. Alexander's reaction indicates his real exuberance at the mention of Dionysos, whose presence in Nysa will have been to him as real as his belief in the existence of the God. The Nysaia played their hand as well they could, but they also enjoyed a great deal of luck.

Yet their luck may have had to do with circumstances much deeper than Alexander's private obsession with Dionysos. It has been suggested that the Nysaia were the forefathers of the modern-day Kefirs.¹⁶ When this ethnic group was first encountered by nineteenth-century European travelers, they elicited much interest and excitement. Themselves members of the Indo-European family of nations, they were distantly related to the Macedonians. It is thus not unreasonable that their own mythology had something in common with Alexander's. However vague the similarity, it will have been enough to elaborate upon, in order to reach a mythological common ground. As we have seen, such a conclusion held considerable benefits for both parties.

Nor was this the first time that the bizarre coincidences of myth and reality created by Alexander's expedition were exploited to further political causes or to offer new mythological interpretations. As we have seen above, Pharasmanes used the presence of female horseback-warriors—a reality on the steppes of central Asia—in order to fire Macedonian imagination, always on the lookout for Amazons.¹⁷ In the case of Prometheus's cave in the “Caucasus” (and, as we shall see presently, regarding the rock Aornos), the process was sparked by a local legend, for which we are lucky to have external evidence.

In comparison, Alexander's reception as the third son of Zeus is outstanding and unique, in that it lacks such supporting coincidence. If any Indian legend told of a Divinity whose three sons descended with an army over the northern mountains into India, it is unknown to modern scholarship. so far as we know, the identification of Alexander as a direct successor of Dionysos and Herakles was not born from a misunderstanding or a manipulation of local tradition, nor did it emerge out of some adaptation through translation. The mythological veneer bedecking the politics of the welcome committee appears a complete and deliberate fabrication. The Indian kings had done their

homework meticulously.

How, we may ask, and when? One may point to the communications between Alexander and Taxiles¹⁸ during the sogdian revolt, to Alexander's proclaimed intention to invade India as early as 328, and to the presence of sisigupta (an Indian renegade who had served with Bessos and then with Alexander) in the King's retinue.¹⁹ Yet these were not the only points of contact. To begin, one ought to consider the Greek settlements in the East before Alexander's time. While there appears no reason to believe in the existence of a thick pre-Alexandrine population of Indo-Greeks in the Far East,²⁰ there is nevertheless evidence for Greek settlements in Baktria which predate Alexander.

One such example is the city of the Branchidai. The members of this community were descended from a group of Milesian refugees who were forced to flee their metropolis following the Greek victory in the Persian wars. Upon meeting Alexander and his army they were overjoyed, and opened their gates. Alexander, however, was mindful of the allegations of sacrilege laid against the Branchidai a century and a half earlier, and in concord with some of the Milesians serving in his own army decided to destroy the Branchidai and uproot their settlement.²¹ Most important for us is the cultural state of the Branchidai when Alexander found them. According to Curtius, “the *mores* of their fathers had not yet become obsolete, but they were already bilingual, degenerating little by little from their domestic to external speech.”²² The implications of Curtius's evidence are clear: the Branchidai both retained Greek traditions, and became fluent enough in the local tongue to become firsthand transmitters of these traditions to the local Baktrians.

Nor were they alone. Herodotus tells us of a group of Greeks from the Libyan community of Barka, who had been expelled from Africa to Asia by King Darius. Darius gave these Barkaioi a village in Baktria, which they also named Barka, after their native town. There they lived still two generations later, in the lifetime of Herodotus (4.204). Thus, we know of at least two Greek settlements whose inhabitants could have transmitted various aspects of Greek myth to the local population.²³ One may even speculate that this Greek presence in Baktria inspired Euripides' short remark on the exploits of Dionysos in that land. We can be certain that at least the Barkaioi had some connection with the West; otherwise Herodotus would not have known that they still existed in his time.

By themselves we should hardly expect the Barkaioi and Branchidai to have effected too much in the way of spreading Greek Myth and religion in the Far East. Yet there were other Greek settlers, much more recent and virtually residents of the Kophen valley. Before his

first crossing of the Hindu Kush (winter of 330/29) Alexander had founded two or more cities in the district of Paropamisadaï. The names of two of them are known: Alexandria (in Caucaso) and Nikaia.²⁴ Curtius states that some veterans were settled there, while Diodorus mentions volunteers from among the mercenaries and three thousand camp-followers. Most or all of these will have been familiar with Greek Myth, and, more importantly, with Alexander's private predilections. Some three years were to pass from the time of their settlement to the reappearance of Alexander in the neighborhood. We can certainly expect the new settlers to have had interaction with the local population. They may also have been the first Hellenes to notice the ivy on Mt. Meros. The presence of ivy immediately brought to mind the God Dionysos, who will have become a subject of conversation between old and new denizens of the valley as soon as his sacred plant was discovered. From such conversations the Nysaïans could have learned of the importance of the native plant to the invaders and their King. These, then, are the likeliest candidates for the transmission of Greek ideas to the local rulers.

Likewise, it is quite plausible that the local population started on its own accord to make room for Alexander in its own mythical world. As Greek foundations the new cities will have espoused Greek cults; one of these will have been to Alexander himself as city founder. Their new neighbors will not have failed to tell the local Indians that their King viewed himself as the son of a God, and everything else they were willing to hear about Greek myth and religion.²⁵

The interaction between Greek and Indian must have been complex, and was carried out on many different levels. The idea that the beliefs of the foreign conqueror could be manipulated for political purposes may well have been hatched by the Indian envoys in Alexander's court. Yet for it to succeed it needed wide acceptance of the religious premises forming the background for these plans. Religion may, indeed, be used by cynical men to gain earthly goals, but in order to achieve that, their stories must be widely believed. It seems unreasonable that the Greeks, due to their ethnocentricity, tended to be more gullible, whereas the Indians achieved the most out of their subjected status by being ever cleverer and more manipulative. It is much likelier that Alexander's appearance had started a process in which his mere presence began to influence local belief. Of course, no nation Alexander encountered could ignore him. The extent of his military successes was unprecedented, and the might of his army unmatched. His advance, furthermore, was astonishingly rapid. When news of Gaugamela first reached India, no one could have expected the storm to arrive at his or her doorstep in less than four years! In India, as everywhere else, the arrival of Alexander meant a complete

upheaval of the existing order. For the religious, this was as good a reason as they were ever likely to get to look to the Divine for explanation.

In light of all this, we should not be surprised to read that Alexander and the Macedonians were occasionally perceived in India as an army of Gods. We have seen that Alexander was congratulated as son of a God when he first entered India. It was not a unique incidence. In the siege of Massaga²⁶ we hear that the Macedonian siege train inspired great fear in the hearts of the defenders: "They were especially terrified by the mobile towers, being unused to such devices, and believed that these giants—moving without the help of any seen agent—were led by power of the Gods."²⁷ The Indian defenders found it hard to believe that such ruinous weapons could be wielded by mortal hands.

Following Alexander's display of foolhardy bravery in the town of the Malloi, and its consequent annihilation at the hands of the Macedonians, an embassy was sent by the remaining Malloi and Oxydrakai.²⁸ According to Curtius, the envoys told Alexander that they had received instructions from their Gods to surrender to him, and that it was for this reason, and not out of fear, that they now offered him their service. According to Arrian, the envoys claimed that their nation had been independent ever since Dionysos's expedition into India; but since Alexander, too, was son of a God, they would gladly receive his satrap. shortly thereafter Alexander was again sailing with his armada downstream. The population living by the river banks was overawed by the size and magnificence of his armament; the river teeming with vessels, the multitude of shining weapons, the cries of the soldiers and the noise of the beating oars were all too much to bear. Believing an invincible army of Gods, headed by a second Dionysos, was upon them, they forced their leaders into surrender.²⁹

Apparently, some Indians did believe Alexander to be more than human. This notion must have pleased Alexander no end. First and foremost, he will have been overjoyed to see people recognize him as son of a God—a recognition which his own Macedonians gave him ever so grudgingly. Furthermore, this semi-divine status had its useful sides. Alexander had always treated with magnanimity those who surrendered unconditionally. If his divine origin now helped on that score, it was a double pleasure.³⁰ What influence Alexander had on the religious thought of the Indians is harder to say. In the long run no such influence has been detected, yet that surely was not the case while Alexander was still in India.³¹ Most importantly, the Indian tendency to recognize Alexander as a supernatural entity, whether adopted for practical purposes or generated by his terrific impact on

reality, was certain to reflect back on Alexander, reinforcing his own convictions.

THE ROCK AORNOS

Still in the northernmost parts of India, Alexander came to the rock Aornos. His arrival there was demanded by the exigencies of war: this was the refuge place of a great many of his enemies. Yet there was another lure: a story was circulating that Herakles himself had tried to capture the Rock, and was rebuffed three times! Eventually, he was called off by a series of earthquakes, and by signs from Heaven.³² Alexander did not need the extra encouragement; it was never his policy to leave behind pockets of resistance. Yet our sources are unanimous in telling us that he was seized by a great desire—*pothos* or *cupido*—to contend with the fame of Herakles, and to surpass it.³³

Such a short time after the royal reception Alexander had received in Alexandria, we should not be surprised. Strabo considered the story to be one of the figments of Alexander's flatterers.³⁴ Arrian thought that Herakles had never made it to India, and that the reason for the story was that “when men encounter a difficulty they tend to magnify it so much as to mythologize that their own difficulties would be impossible even for Herakles.”³⁵ Yet independent evidence suggests that in this case, too, the mythical allusion may have been sparked by a local legend. Once again the evidence comes from a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim—Hiuen Tsiang (c. 629 c.E.). In his travels in northern India he reached a mountain called by him O-lu-no (recognized on linguistic grounds as the Sanskrit Aruna). This mountain, he wrote, increased in height every year, but then crashed down again. He heard a story about it:³⁶

When first the heavenly spirit Śuna came from far to this mountain desiring to rest, the spirit of the mountain, affrighted, shook the surrounding valleys. The heavenly spirit said: “Because you have no wish to entertain me, therefore this tumult and confusion; if you had but entertained me for a little while, I should have conferred on you great riches and treasure; but now I go to Tsu-ku-cha to the mountain Tsu-na-hi-lo, and I will visit it every year. On the occasions, when the king and his ministers offer me their tribute, then you shall stand face to face with me.” Therefore Mount O-lu-no having increased to the height (aforesaid), suddenly falls down again at the top.

The story has been through some changes, but the memetic essence of the plot remains the same: a foreign divinity comes from afar to the mountain; the local divinity repels it by means of an earthquake. The later legend even retains local reference to seismic activity (or some other geophysical disturbance understood in these terms).

Unfortunately, the exact details of the Aornos myth, as Alexander

heard it, lie beyond our knowledge. As we have seen, it is quite likely that they were changed and adapted in the process of telling and interpretation. New additions to the myth may also have arisen to suit Alexander's taste. Nor can we say anything with certainty of the dynamics of the incident. Who first connected the local myth with the name of Herakles? Was it a translator, looking for the proper way to render the story in Greek? One of Alexander's henchmen, cynically fabricating myths for political gain? An epic poet desperately looking for material? A rumor born among the rank and file? Or perhaps Alexander himself?

Be that as it may, the story caught on, and its consequences were enormous. From the military point of view, the capture of Aornos was impressive, but not overwhelming. There were many other achievements more spectacular and influential. Yet in Alexander's mind this new success will have signified a new level of distinction. He had followed in the footsteps of Herakles and Dionysos over the Caucasus and across the Iaxartes, but he has not yet surpassed either of them in any meaningful way. By capturing Aornos Alexander proved that he could achieve a feat too difficult even for Herakles.

Furthermore, the time spent in Baktria and sogdia must have been tough mentally. Not that Alexander minded the exhausting campaign—there is no hint in our sources that he ever wearied of fighting. But troop morale was waning, and, more importantly, there was wide dissatisfaction in the highest echelons of the army. The fatal quarrel with Kleitos left a deep scar. The attempt to introduce *proskynesis* met with annoying resistance. Most importantly, some Macedonians were so unhappy with their King that they conspired to murder him! That the conspiring Pages did not hold high posts and did not command any troops matters little. They were the flower of Macedonia, tomorrow's generals; their fathers currently held positions of power in the army. All this was very dangerous. But to Alexander it must also have been both insulting and deeply depressing. Under these circumstances the unforeseeable developments of the Indian campaign will have done much to uplift his spirit. First, the splendid welcome, then the arrival at Dionysos's city, and finally the capture of the Rock. Alexander could now officially boast that he had outshone Herakles. If his great ancestor and half-brother had been accepted among the Olympians as a reward for his achievements, surely his place, too, was now beyond dispute.³⁷

SCALPING AN ELEPHANT

After subjugating the swat valley Alexander moved to Taxila, where he was received hospitably by king Omphis-Ambhi. But peace, as

usual with Alexander, did not last long. Across the Hydaspes river waited yet another great enemy—King Poros. Realizing that the invaders were on the march against his own lands, Poros marshaled a strong army, and made his stand on the riverbank, intending to prevent the enemy from crossing. Alexander, undaunted, employed clever tactics and took full advantage of the extreme weather conditions of the monsoon (familiar to his Indian enemy but not to him!) to cross the river safely and rout Poros's army. The battle of the Hydaspes rightly deserves to be reckoned as one of Alexander's great battles, together with the Granikos, Issos and Gaugamela.

In his description of the battle Curtius discloses an interesting detail: marching to battle, Poros's infantry contingent carried before it an effigy of Herakles, which acted as a source of encouragement for the foot soldiers. To have deserted the statue's bearers was dishonorable, and to have left it on the battlefield was an offense punishable with death. To this Curtius adds a fascinating observation: once upon a time the Indians had feared this enemy, but by now they had come to venerate him and incorporated him into their religion.³⁸ This unique report by Curtius raises interesting questions concerning the process of *interpretatio Graeca* and the ubiquity of Herakles at this stage of the campaign. Despite Curtius's (or his source's) remark on the acculturation of Herakles in northern India, the effigy in question belonged in all likelihood to some indigenous Divinity. If so, it is remarkable that Herakles in particular was chosen as its Greek counterpart. Was this choice made because the artistic layout of the statue, or the mythology attached to it, displayed some traits that reminded the Greeks of Herakles? Or was the identification a result of Alexander's own preoccupation with his ancestral Hero? The brevity of Curtius's report prohibits an answer.

Be that as it may, the manifestation of Herakles beyond the Hydaspes will have had a double impact. On the one hand, it indicated that Alexander and his men were still marching through "Herakles country." The ancestral Hero of the Macedonian Royal house had been there before them to open up the land, at the same time reassuring them that India still belonged to the recognizable world, and that it, too, was somehow their birthright. On the other hand, the Hero's habit of reappearing again and again made it impossible for Alexander to outdo him geographically. If Alexander was to prove his superiority, he would have to do so on the military field, as at Aornos. Furthermore, how should Alexander react to the presence of Herakles in the enemy's camp? In Tyre he dreamt that the Hero gave consent to his attack on the city. No such sign is recorded here.

The ambivalence created by this new materialization of Herakles

finds an expression also in the official celebrations which followed the battle of the Hydaspes. Ever mindful of the Divine, Alexander celebrated the grand victory with a sacrifice to the sun, which gave him victory and opened for him the boundaries of the East. The sacrifice was complemented with the usual athletic games to refresh the soldiers. Furthermore, Alexander founded two new cities in the vicinity of the battleground. One was named “Nikaia,” to commemorate the victory itself; the other “Boukephala” in honor of the King's famous horse, which had died about the same time after long years of good service.³⁹

As after Issos, Alexander chose to memorialize his great achievement in numismatic terms as well. However, unlike Issos, where he had at his disposal the excellent minting facilities of Kilikia and the Levant (not to mention Amphipolis), the volume of the new celebratory issue was constrained by the limited capabilities of the traveling mint which had accompanied the army on the campaign. The result was therefore a small number of gold coins, issued as commemorative medallions rather than as regular currency.⁴⁰ These were disbursed to the leaders of the various units, and to others, according to the services rendered on the battlefield, or to closeness of friendship.⁴¹

The most conspicuous image on this series of victory medallions is the elephant. Understandably so, since the battle of the Hydaspes was also the first encounter of a Greek army with a large, well-trained corps of elephants, used effectively in battle. Although Alexander's men found ways to deal with the huge beasts, even defeat them, they were nonetheless greatly awed and impressed. The mutiny at the Hyphasis, where the soldiers refused—for the first and last time—to follow Alexander's marching orders, was caused at least in part by rumors of the vast numbers of battle elephants employed by the Indian armies that lay ahead.⁴²

Of the fascinating series of the elephant medallions, one outstanding item deserves special discussion.⁴³ The reverse of this unique coin shows an elephant facing right, along the lines of the usual “elephant and archer” medallions.⁴⁴ The decidedly dramatic obverse shows Alexander the Great with a wide-open stare and bulging forehead, sporting the horns of Ammon and topped by the scalp of an elephant.⁴⁵ The allusion is clear enough: Alexander is identified by the horns as the son of Zeus-Ammon, and is juxtaposed by the pachydermic headgear with Herakles and his famous lion skin, advertised profusely on Alexander's own coinage.

The message conveyed by the coin is striking yet elusive. On the one hand, it sets Alexander *en par* with Herakles—both are sons of Zeus and both sport on their heads the scalps of slain animals. On the

other, the coin also suggests a sense of superiority enjoyed by Alexander. This sense of superiority is twofold: first, Alexander's coin is made of gold, more prestigious and expensive than the silver used for the Herakles coins. Then, there is the matter of the animals themselves. As we have seen, Alexander could certainly boast killing a lion. But Herakles, even though he reached India, had never defeated an elephant, a considerably more impressive beast!

Admittedly, Alexander's elephant-scalp coin—assuming, again, that it is real—comes nowhere near the Herakles coins in terms of circulation. While Herakles and his lion skin became the common currency of the entire Hellenistic world, the series depicting Alexander with the elephant scalp will have numbered only a few thousands, given Curtius's numbers for the entire issue and this particular coin's uniqueness among the otherwise rare elephant medallions. It would thus appear that even if Alexander did wish to advertise his superiority over Herakles in the aftermath of the battle against Poros, he did so with great caution, and to a limited extent.

COLONY OF THE SIBOI

In early winter 326/5 Alexander and his army returned from the Hyphasis river, where, against the wishes of the King, they had turned back. Joining his newly built armada at the banks of the Hydaspes, he now began his long journey down the Indus river system, all the way to the Great sea.⁴⁶ soon after the flotilla set out, it reached the land of the siboi (or sibai), at the confluence of the Hydaspes and the Akesines. Alexander disembarked his army and marched towards one of their cities.⁴⁷ A delegation of esteemed citizens met the King, brought him splendid gifts and promised to aid him in everything, in token of their ancient relation. After all, they were the descendants of settlers left there by Herakles after his campaign against Aornos. The siboi, as befitted the descendants of Herakles' followers, still wore the hides of wild animals, used throwing-clubs as their main weapons, and branded their cattle and mules with the sign of a club. "Although they had forgotten Greek *mores*, they still showed vestiges of their origin."⁴⁸ Alexander was pleased by their goodwill and, as with the city of Nysa, he proclaimed the cities free and continued his march against other nations.⁴⁹

Alexander may well have been surprised to find a Heraklid foundation in this place. The confluence of the two rivers was probably some 700 kilometers, as the bird flies, south of Aornos; Sibipura another 160 kilometers downstream. Why did Herakles journey so far south to settle his men, especially if he left behind the sick, as Curtius tells us?⁵⁰ Before we explain the incident as yet

another wise choice made by Indian leaders who had studied their menace well, or turn to Arrian's observation that "things that look unbelievable, when one regards them according to probability, do not appear at all incredible should one add the Divine to the story" (5.1.2), we may consider a third possibility.

As we saw in the story heard by Hiuen Tsiang, Aornos was approached by a deity called *Suna*. This *Suna* has been assimilated with the more familiar Indian deity *Śiva*.⁵¹ Mt. Aruna is known from Indian sources as sacred to the God *Śiva*. If the siboi are related to *Śiva*, as their name suggests,⁵² could it not be that they did, in fact, have an affinity with the Rock Aornos? In Hiuen Tsiang's telling of the Aornos myth *Suna* withdrew from the mountain and settled elsewhere. The siboi may have considered themselves a part of the myth (we can probably expect their telling of the myth to be nearer the one heard by Alexander than the much later version related to the itinerant monk). Thus, Alexander's reconnaissance agents will have heard from the siboi about their connection with Aornos. The skins, the clubs and the branding of the cattle—all *mores* of the siboi, which have nothing to do with the Greeks' Herakles—will have put their story beyond doubt.

It is likely against this background that we should understand Alexander's sacrifice to Herakles on the Hydaspes.⁵³ According to instruction from his professional seers—they accompanied him wherever he went—he poured libations and invoked the river Gods Hydaspes and Akesines, as well as Indus. Before setting sail in their waters it behooved him to be polite. He then made further libations: to Herakles, to Ammon and to the other Gods to whom he customarily made offerings (unfortunately, we are not told who these customary Gods were). Why were Herakles and Ammon singled out in this case? Herakles, at least, may have been invoked before entering the lands belonging to his ancient colony. Once again, as elsewhere along the track of Herakles, Alexander could see himself as the legitimate heir, reclaiming what was once gained by his ancestor—just like the Herakleidai in the Peloponnese, or Dorieus in Eryx.⁵⁴

The foundation story of the Heraklid colony of the siboi marks an important point in the relationship between the Alexander and Herakles memplexes. Thus far Alexander emulated his Hero and aspired to surpass him, but the traditional myth of Herakles remained intact. The identification of the Hindu Kush as the Caucasus—the first sign of influence exerted by Alexander's self-creating myth on that of Herakles—transplanted the locale of Herakles' meeting with Prometheus, but did not change the essential story. The Rock Aornos was a step forward, a new addition. It was the fruit of the natural identification of local and Greek myths. In the story of the siboi we

see for the first time how the reality of Alexander's expedition influenced the very telling of a Herakles myth: a detail was inserted, quite unknown in any older myths of Herakles.

By Alexander's time Herakles was already a veteran in setting precedents for Greek presence and settlement in foreign lands. An exotic example appears in the story told by Greeks who lived on the shores of the Pontus and preserved by Herodotus (4.8-10), concerning the origin of the skythian kings. On his way back to Greece with the cattle of Geryones, Herakles came to cold, wintry skythia. As he slept one night, cuddled in his lion-skin, his mares disappeared. They turned out to be in the custody of a female monster, human from the buttocks up, serpent below. The Hero asked if she knew where the mares were; she said she had them, and demanded a reward. Of the two options before him, awarding the monster her reward seemed to Herakles more pleasing. Three sons later he was ready to depart. The monster asked what she should do with the children when they grew up. Herakles left behind one of his two bows, a girdle and a golden phial. He gave the mother instructions to keep with her the sons who would succeed in bending the bow and would know the appropriate manner in which to wear the girdle; the others were to be sent away. The youngest son, skythes, succeeded in bending the bow, and guessed the right way to put on the girdle. Thus he became the first king of the skythians, who to Herodotus's day still carried golden phials on their girdles. The story, regardless of its fantastic features, reflects Herakles' usual *modus operandi*; that is, to use his progeny in acts of colonization and settlements which he himself initiated (although this story is considerably less violent than Herakles' usual exploits). Another example is the story of the Greek colonization of sardinia.⁵⁵ This project was undertaken and achieved by the sons of Herakles from the daughters of Thespios, in company with Herakles' nephew, Iolaos. The original example, of course, came from the Peloponnese itself, cleared by Herakles of monsters and tyrants and inherited, after a long delay, by the throng of Herakleidai.

The colony of the siboi is, in this respect, extraordinary. No son of Herakles is mentioned, merely sick veterans. Was this detail added by a Greek, or was it a part of the story told by the siboi about themselves? At first glance, of all the origin myths a group of people is likely to tell of itself, one in which it is composed of discarded invalids rings rather odd; but there is no accounting for taste. Yet a closer look at the historical context shows a close relation with the reality of Alexander's campaign. Alexander had settled men unfit for service in Alexandria in Caucaso (the first foundation in India), in Alexandria Eschate (on the Tanais/Iaxartes), and at Arigaion in northern India.⁵⁶ For the Greeks retelling the story of the siboi it would be natural, by

this stage of the campaign, to assume that the foundation was originally composed of discarded soldiers. If this detail was, after all, an elaboration by the locals, they were very well briefed indeed. Be that as it may, just as the representation of Alexander with the elephant scalp represents a new development of a known Herakles theme, the foundation story of the siboi represents an original addition to the myth of Herakles with a new, distinct, Alexandresque flavor.⁵⁷ In the [next chapter chapter 4](#) we shall see other cases where the myth of Herakles, ostensibly older than that of Alexander, nevertheless replicates some of Alexander's memes.

DUEL OF THE GODS

Early in 325, two years after the invasion of India, Alexander celebrated the successful conclusion to the campaign against the Malloi and Oxydrakai. The campaign was gruesome. The Macedonians suffered greatly—it was possibly the hardest bit of fighting since they left their homes. The local population was decimated. some suffered an even worse fate, as entire villages and towns were wiped out. Alexander himself was wounded in dramatic fashion and nearly expired. It now became all too clear to generals, officer corps, and the army at large, to what a degree they depended on one man, their King and leader, son of Ammon, heir to Herakles.

As is to be expected, the celebrations which followed the campaign took the shape of a banquet. As often before, nothing good came of it.⁵⁸ At one point during the party, certain Macedonians started to heckle Dioxippos, an Athenian champion in the *pankration* (a full-contact combination of wrestling and boxing) who had won first prizes in all the important games. They said, some jokingly, some in a more serious tone, that he was a fat beast, who delighted himself in banquets, oily and perfumed, while they were toiling in arms.⁵⁹ A Macedonian soldier by the name of Koragos, distinguished for bravery in battle and military prowess, challenged Dio-xippos to a duel.⁶⁰ The Athenian accepted the challenge, deriding the Macedonian. With all the attendants at the banquet egging them on, Alexander had no choice but to set a date for the contest.

When the day arrived, the camp had already become polarized on geographical and ethnic lines. The Greeks, or we should perhaps say southern Greeks, championed the Athenian, while the Macedonians lined up behind their compatriot. Both protagonists cut dashing figures, and the crowd expected the contest *as if it were a battle between gods*, an evenly balanced match.⁶¹ The Macedonian, fully decked in expensive arms, inspired fear like Ares; the Athenian prizefighter armed himself with a club, and bore a Herakles-like

look.⁶²

The fight was fast and furious. Koragos swung his javelin, but Dioxippos gingerly moved his body out of harm's way. The Macedonian next leveled his pike and charged, but the agile Athenian dashed it to pieces with his club. Then, dropping his weapon, he lunged for the adversary's sword-arm with his left. With his right he grappled at the Macedonian's legs, rammed into him, and knocked him flat on the ground. Quick as lightning he was back on his feet, club in hand, foot on the Macedonian's neck. The entire affair cannot have taken more than a couple of minutes.

Yet Dioxippos's smashing victory was also his undoing. Alexander was much distressed by the turn of events, and his unhappiness spelled a bad end for the Athenian. A few days later a golden cup disappeared from the banquet of the King, and mysteriously reappeared among Dioxippos's belongings. A formal accusation soon followed, and the pankratiast soon realized that he had lost the King's favor. In anger and frustration Dioxippos committed suicide, leaving behind a reproachful letter full of recriminating allegations against his malicious enemies. The entire incident left a very sour taste.

One obvious cause for Alexander's dissatisfaction with the outcome of the duel has to do with political reasoning and military strategy. We have seen how the aura of invincibility had served Alexander and his men during their campaign in northern India. Several potential enemies had been cowed into submission without striking a blow, owing merely to the awesome reputation of the Macedonian fighting machine. With many Indian envoys in the audience, both from those nations he had just conquered and from those he would perhaps still have to fight, this was hardly the message Alexander wanted to convey concerning the celebrated military greatness of the Macedonians.⁶³

Yet there may have been other reasons, which had more to do with internal affairs. Understandably, the result of the duel was highly distressing for the Macedonians. For one, there was the natural humiliation of seeing one of their own being defeated so soundly by an Athenian. But that was not all. The Macedonian champion entered battle in full armor, while the Athenian competed naked. At face value, this was a distinct insult to Macedonian arms and pride. On a deeper level, this was a confrontation between two widely divergent sets of values, lying at the heart of the sharp tension between Alexander and his army. On the one hand was Herakles, an emblem of individualistic Heroic valor; on the other was Ares, armed as a Macedonian hoplite, but helpless as an individual against Herakles' might. Many Macedonians, who felt that their own part in glory was being overshadowed by that of their King, will have identified with

his situation. This sense of helplessness is sharpened by the impressive play-by-play description of the battle, an amount of detail quite unprecedented in the melee narratives of the Alexander-histories.

The episode is also instructive as to the religious atmosphere in Alexander's court. That the confrontation was perceived as a *theomachia*, a battle of Gods, is testimony enough to the mindset of the participants, who almost expected to see the Gods and Heroes walking in their midst. Particularly instructive is the choice of Dioxippos. Although in hindsight his decision "to masquerade as Heracles before a Heraclid who had made it so much his business to emulate the hero," may seem tact-less,⁶⁴ it surely was not meant to be. On the contrary, the safer guess would be that the Athenian intended to please Alexander with this gesture. He may have thought the King would be glad to see Herakles overcome Ares in this battle of Gods. Perhaps he even prepared his victory (of which he was certain) as a jibe against those Macedonians who derided Alexander for emulating Herakles. In that case, the Athenian in the Hero's garb would be the real representative of Alexander combatting the Macedonian ingrates.

There can be no doubt that Dioxippos was well acquainted with Alexander's special relationship with Herakles, and it makes no sense to assume that he wanted to aggravate the King. His suicide, as well as the sense of insulted and hurt pride in his letter to Alexander, testify that Dioxippos was surprised and indignant at his fall from grace. He misjudged, but judgment there was. Dioxippos's offense had a lot to do with the damage he had done to the fighting reputation of the Macedonians, and to the deep tensions and anxieties which it brought to the surface. But perhaps it had something to do also with the fact that he made a much more glamorous Herakles than Alexander?⁶⁵

AN UNRESOLVED RIVALRY

The "battle of the Gods" marks the last appearance of Herakles in the historical accounts of Alexander's campaign.⁶⁶ Given the fact that the vast variety of firsthand accounts of Alexander has perished, and that the historical narratives at our disposal today are all secondary sources (tertiary, in the case of Justin), it would be unwise to make any sweeping arguments on the basis of this particular silence. Nevertheless, if one may venture a guess as to the absence of Herakles from the rest of the campaign, it may perhaps be reasoned that after Alexander turned back westward, there was no more need for the trailblazing Hero.

Whether Alexander succeeded or not in outdoing Herakles remained an open question. As far as public relations were concerned, India

gave Alexander many reasons to feel satisfied. He was recognized as the son of Zeus from the moment of his arrival, and his campaign was openly perceived as an event of enormous theological proportions. On the battlefield his record was even better. At Aornos he gained a clear advantage over his ancestor and role model. In the battle of the Hydaspes he squarely defeated an army which rallied around a statue of Herakles. Yet in terms of geography—possibly the most important area of competition given Alexander's obsession to reach the world's end—Herakles proved a most elusive adversary, nigh impossible to beat. No matter what new land Alexander added to his list of conquests, Herakles always turned out to have been there before him. One imagines that this phenomenon brought Alexander at once great comfort and deep distress.

This sense of ambivalence is manifest in the reference to Herakles (and Dionysos), made in the contradictory versions of the speeches ascribed by Curtius and Arrian to Alexander on the banks of the Hyphasis. In Curtius's version (9.2.29) the appeal to Hercules and Pater Liber comes at the very climax of the speech, just before a methodical break, intended to give the audience a chance to burst into cheers and shouts. The argument is simple: Alexander is on the verge of equaling his two predecessors, and a small push forward will give him the opportunity to do so. Arrian's version (5.26.5-6) displays the opposite rationale: since the expedition has already gone beyond Nysa (presumably the furthest point reached by Dionysos), and since even Aornos, which Herakles had failed to capture, was now in Macedonian hands, the conquest of what remained of Asia was a small task in comparison. The two authors thus suggest radically different points of view. Curtius sees the ongoing competition with Herakles and Dionysos as a prime motive in Alexander's desire to cross the Hyphasis, while in Arrian these two Divinities have already been surpassed.

Needless to say, one cannot take these two speeches to represent Alexander's actual words. This is not because they contain contradicting attitudes (Curtius's speech is delivered before the entire army, Arrian's before an assembly of officers—they are thus different speeches), but because we cannot determine to what degree Curtius and Arrian relied on the primary sources in putting together their own compositions. Furthermore, even if we did possess the equivalent speeches from the primary sources, they would probably contain similar contradictions. At least, it would not be unreasonable to say that the two conflicting attitudes represented by Curtius and Arrian seem to be couched in terms that would be familiar to Alexander himself, and could well represent his own changing mood. After traversing such incomprehensible distances, yet failing to reach the

End of the World, Alexander must have realized that his chase was endless. The rivalry which so dominated his life could only be decided after his death.

Symbiosis

In the previous chapters we followed the course of Alexander's life from the Danube to the Indus, examining the appearances of Herakles along the way. We have seen how Herakles was a constant companion of Alexander in his long, arduous campaign. The importance of this companionship to a man of Alexander's religious awareness cannot be overstated. Herakles had a unique life, one of constant toil and danger. His reward was ultimate: he became a God. Alexander's extraordinary successes, equaling those of Herakles (at the Rock Aornos even surpassing them), brought about theological consequences of mathematical clearness. If the achievements of Herakles won him Divine status, and if Alexander's achievements were (at least) as great as those of Herakles, then Alexander, too, had qualified for Divinity. But such logical transparency could hardly have dominated Alexander's state of mind. More likely, it came to him in flashes of clarity, like sunrays amid the mists of insecurity and doubt. It was thus important for Alexander repeatedly to reinforce the connection with his Heroic ancestor, to assure himself again and again that he was on the right track.¹

The theological syllogism mentioned above had enormous ramifications for Alexander personally, but not only for him. The Heroic concept was a cornerstone of Greek religion. Men and women of old were honored in special ways: they were mentioned in prayers and received sacrifices, their graves and physical remains were thought to possess supernatural properties. In more recent times men could win Heroic honors by founding cities.² Many nobles throughout Hellas could claim that Heroic or even Divine blood was flowing in their veins. Yet the stature and magnitude of a Theseus or an Achilles were well beyond the capacity of anyone living in the fourth century

B.c. such heights belonged to a distant past, remote and unattainable.

Nevertheless, if one were to try to reach Heroic stature after all, there were simple touchstones for measuring one's success. One had to display *aretē** of Heroic proportions, achieve outstanding success, and, perhaps most importantly, win commensurate fame. To become a figure of Myth one had to have an audience.³ The centrality of *aretē* in the notion of the Heroic, as perceived by Alexander and his contemporaries, is shown clearly in Aristotle's famous hymn.⁴ *Aretē*, here personified by Aristotle, was the reason why Herakles and Leda's lads (the Dioskouroi) suffered endless toil; it was *Aretē* who drove Achilles and Aias to the halls of Hades. But she also gave them "immortal might, better than gold," and their resulting fame finds but one manifestation in this short hymn. The relevance of the *Hymn to Aretē* can hardly be exaggerated, considering the connection of Aristotle with young Alexander. If the young prince had not actually perused this particular piece of poetry, its message and purport were certainly a part of his education.⁵ Nor did Alexander fail to put theory into practice. Whatever line existed in people's minds, dividing historical time (*spatium historicum*) from sacred time (*spatium mythicum*), Alexander shattered it to bits.

This chapter deals with a series of incidents and stories, which testify to the special connections between Alexander and Herakles. These include some crucial historical events, already treated in the previous chapters, as well as stories which do not belong to Alexander's life, but rather to his posthumous reputation and his myth. The common thread running through the evidence is the sense of memetic *symbiosis* between the two figures. It is my aim in this chapter to show how Alexander closely identified with Herakles, and how this theme was picked up without interruption after his death, when his myth retained the same closeness to Herakles that Alexander experienced in person. We begin, therefore, at Alexander's last banquet, which also saw the last appearance of Herakles in Alexander's life. Here ends one story of Alexander, and another begins.

THE CUP OF HERAKLES

Alexander died in Babylon, on the last day of the month Daisios, in the 114th Olympiad, the year of Hegesias's archonship at Athens, four months before his thirtythird birthday.⁶ In hindsight, his death may not seem surprising or premature. All of Alexander's adult life was spent in hard fighting and heavy drinking. He was wounded often; some of the wounds were severe, one nearly fatal. Alexander was ever active, commonly at the head of his men in battle, always

accompanying them and sharing in their toil. To all this add the cares and workload of managing a world conquering expedition, a burden of which we hear next to nothing in our sources, but which must be taken for granted none the less. A mortal body was bound to give in.

Unmixed wine, in abundance, played a part in the King's last illness. Despite the attempts of Aristoboulos to explain away Alexander's drinking habits—today these would be called a drinking *problem*—the amount of evidence to the contrary is overwhelming.⁷ Kallisthenes, a close member of Alexander's personal retinue, once made a mordant remark on the King's drunkenness. At some point, it is true, he adopted a hostile attitude to Alexander. Not so Polykleitos and Chares. The latter, who was Alexander's usher, described one drinking competition at the end of which the death toll reached forty-one!⁸

Diodorus wrote about the outburst of Alexander's illness, "He was summoned to come to one of his friends, Medios the Thessalian, for a grand party. There he drank much unmixed wine; he then filled a great drinking-cup in memory of Herakles' death, and downed it at once. straightway he was stunned, as if hit by a severe blow, gave a great cry, and was carried away on the arms of his friends."⁹ Plutarch found fault with such descriptions; there was no 'cup of Herakles' and no sudden seizure, as if from being hit by a spear. "some people thought they ought to write these things as if they were producing the tragic, heartrending last scene of a great drama."¹⁰ "Aristoboulos, on the other hand," he continues, "says that, driven mad by fever and violent thirst, he drank wine, which made him delirious and brought about his death." Two conclusions suggest themselves: first, that the version adopted by Diodorus and alluded to by Plutarch was the more common one, the account by Aristoboulos markedly different. second, that considering Aristoboulos's tendency to defend Alexander from the charge of drunkenness, the common story is also the more plausible one.¹¹

Yet Plutarch was not deceived by his instinct. This scene, like so many others in Alexander's life, was indeed part of a drama, one whose author, director and lead actor was Alexander. It is dangerous to speculate about the psyche of historical subjects. But it is also undeniably clear to any reader of the accounts of Alexander's last year that he must have had a strong sense of fulfillment and closure.¹² He had conquered every last bit of the Persian Empire—further his soldiers would not go—and the ultimate recesses of the East were forever denied him. His best-loved friend and most trusted aide, Hephaestion, had drunk himself to death.¹³ New endeavors would require time and preparation, and the ruling of empire could hardly be as exciting, or provide as much scope for the display of military *aretē*, as did its acquisition. Alexander certainly was as negligent of his

health as he was of his soothsayers' words of warning.¹⁴

The makings of drama are all present. The actual cause of Alexander's death is impossible to ascertain. For all we know, Alexander may have been poisoned by Antipatros and his faction.¹⁵ It matters little. Alexander emptied the cup of Herakles in one draught.¹⁶ His final toast he made "to the death of Herakles!" Everyone knew what fate had awaited that Hero beyond.¹⁷ A great shout of pain pierced the din of the banquet; how Herakles must have shouted when he put on the poisoned cloak! Alexander burned, and wasted away in agony, just as did his hero and ancestor. Only the staunchest agnostic could remain doubtful.

BIRTH OF A HERO

The banquet scene in Medios's quarters is a terminal point of the long process of identification between Alexander and Herakles, a process which started during Alexander's life and continued long after his death. The obvious counterpoint, of even greater drama and romance, comes at the birth of the two Heroes. To begin, both Alexander and Herakles have a God for a father. Herakles' father is Zeus, who lusted after the mortal Alkmene; Alexander's is Ammon, regularly identified with Zeus. Of course, both Herakles and Alexander also have a mortal father: Amphitryon and Philippos, respectively. significantly, in both cases the connection between the mother and the immortal father is made *before* the first union with her mortal husband. Alkmene, so the story goes, delayed her marriage to Amphitryon until he had avenged the death of her brothers by the Teleboans. Yet when he came, fresh from battle, and desired to consummate the marriage, he discovered to his amazement that someone had taken up his image and beaten him to the mark. In the latter case, Olympias had a vision of a thunderbolt reaching her womb on the night *before* her marriage, when she was still a maiden. Philippos, on the other hand, dreamt that he was sealing up her womb "at a later date."¹⁸ Officially, at least, both women are supposed to have been virgins at the time of conception.

Another motif which recurs in the birth stories of both Heroes is the sudden appearance of reptile animals. In the case of Herakles, two huge serpents were sent by Hera to eliminate Zeus's new offspring. Baby Herakles, still not one year old, took them both by the neck and strangled them to death.¹⁹ In Alexander's birth story the serpent plays an inverted role: it is the shape assumed by Ammon when he approaches Olympias.²⁰ The telling of the *Romance* (1.10-11), replacing Ammon with Nektanebo as the furtive father, finds new roles for the serpent. When Philippos, who was not fully convinced by

the dreams sent to him through Nektanebo's magic powers, threatened to punish Olympias for her unfaithfulness, the Egyptian mage himself assumed the shape of a giant snake, and made an appearance at the royal banquet. Philippos and his guests were greatly distraught; but not Olympias, who took the serpent in her lap and gladly accepted its tokens of affection. The snake then turned into an eagle and flew away. The shocked Philippos had no choice but to recognize that his wife was indeed favored by a Divinity. A few days later, Philippos was sitting in his garden, watching the birds. suddenly, one bird laid an egg in his lap. Then a small snake was hatched, and proceeded to encircle the egg. But when it tried to reenter it, it died. A court prophet, whom Philippos consulted, foretold that the egg signified the world, and the snake Philippos's son, who would circumambulate the entire world, then come back to his own kingdom and die there. The snake thus stands not only for Nektanebo-Ammon, but also for Alexander himself!

Another point of similarity is the negative role played by the jealous spouse of the divine father. Herakles was haunted throughout his life by angry Hera, who, in her guile, deprived him of his intended status as King of the house of Perseus, and allotted him a life of toilsome and dangerous service. Further, it was because he was able to defeat her snakes that the infant Alkaios (that was his real name), received his new name: the one who gained glory (*kleos*) through Hera.²¹ A similar approach appears in another work by Plutarch, the fascinating two-day presentation *De Fortuna Alexandri*, dating from the late first or early second century c.E.²² The focus here is on the antagonistic relationship of Alexander with the Goddess Tyche (Greek counterpart of Fortuna), who did her best to hinder him at every step. In fact, no other has suffered from such terrible malignity, except for Herakles.²³ In this respect Tyche plays in Alexander's life the same role that Hera plays in Herakles'. And though Plutarch never makes a direct connection between the two Goddesses, an Athenian relief from Alexander's time depicts Tyche as Zeus's spouse.²⁴ It is against this backdrop that one ought to read the famous anecdote concerning Olympias, where, in response to incessant talk about the paternity of her prodigious son, she asks, "Will Alexander never stop getting me into trouble with Hera?"²⁵

CHANGING LANDSCAPES

The Tyrian affair marks an important turning point in the life of Alexander.²⁶ To begin, it forged the connection of Alexander and Herakles on the battlefield. Although worshipped for ages by the Tyrians themselves, when Alexander laid siege to the city Herakles

appeared to him in a dream and lent the endeavor his full support. This gesture conveys a double significance, at the same time symbolizing Herakles' preference for Alexander over his adversaries, and promising him the Hero's special care and attention in overcoming grave personal perils and daunting technical difficulties.

Yet Herakles' gesture meant much more. Connecting the island city with the mainland—the only means open to Alexander considering his lack of naval superiority—amounted to a change in cosmic order. This was no trifling matter, as the following story will show. some time early in the second half of the sixth century, Cyrus's Median general, Harpagos, subjected the coastal Greek cities of Asia Minor to Persian rule. The people of Knidos thought to defend themselves against his onslaught by cutting a deep trench across their isthmus, effectively turning themselves into islanders. During the construction work the Knidians noticed that the workmen were suffering strange, almost providential injuries, especially to the eyes, caused by flying splinters of stone. something was wrong. They sent to Delphi to inquire about this hindrance. The Pythia answered thus: “Nor wall nor dig across your isthmus; long ago your land had been an isle, if Zeus had willed it so.”²⁷ The Knidians immediately stopped all work, and when Harpagos arrived with his army they duly surrendered.

One lesson of the Knidian episode is that making major alterations to the physical landscape was a matter of religious importance. As the response of the Pythia clearly shows, the shaping of the Earth was considered part of a Divine Plan. One was not allowed to make any changes to it, unless one had first obtained Divine sanction. Pausanias, writing about the Knidian attempt, observed, “‘Tis hard for man violently to overpower things Divine.”²⁸ The Knidians, discovering this truth, obeyed the oracle and paid for their piety with their independence.

One Hero, however, was exempt from the rule; it was even expected of him to reshape the land for the benefit of its inhabitants. That Hero was Herakles. Many lands profited from his labor. In the valley of Tempe Herakles drained the marshes by excavating a channel, creating the plains along the banks of the Peneios for the benefit of the Greeks. During his sojourn in Pheneos (where he was said to have brought Apollo's tripod, on which more below), he dug two canals, draining flood water which had previously wreaked havoc in the city. In Thebes he diverted the water of the Kephisos into the Orchomenian plain. In Thrace he dug a tunnel from the sea to a low-lying vale, thus creating Lake Bistonis, in order to counter the tactical advantages of his enemies' cavalry. When Prometheus ruled Egypt, Herakles closed many gaps in the banks along the course of the Nile, and thus prevented great flood disasters.²⁹ Finally, in western Greece, Herakles

ordered the flow of the Paracheloïtis, or Acheloös, as a favor to Oineus and the Kalydonians.³⁰ some poets, so Diodorus says, composed a myth out of Herakles' deed, and introduced an actual battle between the Hero and the River God, who assumed for the occasion the shape of a bull. One horn, broken off during the struggle, was called the horn of Amaltheia, the proverbial horn of plenty. The myth sends a clear message: to change the course of a river was to struggle with the Divine.

Alexander, like his great ancestor, did not recoil from such struggles. Pausanias preserves an aborted attempt by the Macedonian King to dig a channel through the Corinthian Isthmus. This alone of Alexander's endeavors did not come out well. He had more success, however, in Klazomenai, where he attempted the reverse of the Knidian effort: Alexander made an island into a part of the mainland.³¹ This episode is little known, as it remained outside the surviving histories of Alexander.³² The same strategy was used with much greater advertisement in Tyre. The task of building the great mole, which to this day connects the island of Tyre to the mainland, was Herculean not only in scale, but also in audacity. Like his predecessor, Alexander felt he could challenge Nature herself.³³

As we have seen, the siege of Tyre was neither necessary nor automatic. In fact, military strategy and international politics allowed for a peaceful solution. When the Tyrians proposed that Alexander sacrifice in the Old City, he could well have chosen to accept their diplomatic suggestion. There is no evidence to show that by doing so he would be any less respectful to the God. The precinct on the mainland was older, and could thus be seen as more venerable. Besides, it is probably safe to assume that Macedonia knew no specific protocol for sacrifices to Herakles in Tyre, which would compel Alexander to visit one temple or the other.³⁴ Why, therefore, the insistence to celebrate on the island itself?

To answer this question, one ought to consider first a number of subsidiary questions: How well was Alexander informed concerning Tyrian religion in general, and the *Egersis* festival in particular? If he was, in fact, aware of the festival's particulars and symbolisms, what part did he plan to take in the proceedings? Will a simple sacrifice have sufficed, or did he intend to assume the role of *Egerseites*? The present state of the sources does not allow for a clear answer to any of these questions. Nevertheless, they cannot be avoided. If Alexander did indeed know and understand the full meaning of the *Egersis*, and if he planned to preside over the ceremony as *Egerseites*, that would amount, at least in Tyrian eyes, to his identification as a Herakles incarnate!³⁵

The implications of these possibilities are raised a notch in the

context of Alexander's second visit to Tyre. On his return there from Egypt Alexander held magnificent musical and athletic competitions, with participants from Greece, Cyprus and elsewhere.³⁶ The decision to hold the games is significant in itself. The city of Tyre had suffered badly from the siege. A considerable part of the population either perished or was sold into slavery. The institution of the games, as well as the understanding that they were to become a permanent fixture of the Tyrian calendar, signified Alexander's will that (unlike Thebes) the city was to be raised from its ruins and become prosperous once again.³⁷

Now, Alexander's games took place at the very beginning of spring. They thus coincided with, or at least took place very close to, the traditional date of the *Egersis*.³⁸ The few data at our disposal do not disclose how much the new festival retained of its ancient Tyrian features. However, if the essence of the *Egersis* was retained, and since Alexander must have presided over the festivities (to whom else would this honor be given?), we may have a clear case of Alexander enacting complete self-identification with his ancestral Hero.

This impression is accentuated not only by the turn of events in siwah and Memphis (on which see the next section), but also by another incident which probably took place during the games. While Alexander was on the campaign trail, an acute shortage of corn troubled Greece. This was alleviated by a subsidized shipment sponsored by Alexander and handled by his trusted agent Harpalos. Thankful for this benefaction, as well as for the fact that the transaction was carried out using the facilities of Megara, this city decreed that Alexander be given an honorary citizenship, and sent out a deputation to declare this honor in Tyre. At first, Alexander poked fun at the self-importance of the puny *politeia*. But when the ambassadors replied solemnly that this was a unique honor, given before that time only to Herakles, Alexander turned sober and his derision turned into respect.³⁹ The upshot of the Megarean gesture was clear enough: Alexander and Herakles were two unique figures—the only strangers who had ever qualified to receive citizenship in Megara. The two belonged to a class of their own, to which no one else belonged, neither in myth nor in reality.

DIVINE SON

In light of the Tyrian affair, one can also understand better Alexander's visit to the oracle of Ammon in siwah. Whatever motive is ascribed to the visit by historians, ancient and modern, the unfolding of its story usually reads as a surprise. The introduction of Divine sonship into the plot is unexpected, even startling.⁴⁰ Events at Tyre

put it into perspective. some degree of identification between Alexander and Herakles was created during the siege, most pungently after its successful conclusion. It now seems natural for Alexander to have turned to the famous oracle to find an answer to the question that we can imagine was on his mind and in his heart. If indeed Herakles had visited the oracle in the past, that was all the more reason to follow in his footsteps.

If these were Alexander's wishes, Ammon duly confirmed them. The events of the journey to siwah and Alexander's stay there are likely to remain a topic of study and debate for many generations to come. It is remarkable, however, that from the outset the episode was treated as Myth.⁴¹ That such a journey, a pilgrimage to a major oracle, should have aroused acute religious feelings, is only natural. showers of rain which facilitated the passage through treacherous terrain were taken as tokens of divine aid.⁴² The guidance of some crows must also be considered in context. In a highly charged religious atmosphere many innocuous events may take on new, unexpected significance. some crows there surely were (perhaps some serpents, too). Their distant offspring still guided travelers to the oasis of siwah more than two millennia after Alexander.⁴³

The recognition of Alexander as the son of Ammon elevated him to a new level in the hierarchy of Greek genealogy. The sixteen names distancing him from Zeus were removed at once, while he gained the status of Hero, similar to that of Herakles and Perseus. But what of Philippos? The question of dual paternity haunted Alexander throughout his life. The soldiers understandably resented his Divine Sonship. Macedonia was a fledgling superpower, and it was Philippos, a mere generation before, who had given the country its cohesion and built its unmatched army. It was this unbeatable military machine which enabled Alexander to display such *aretē* and make a claim to the Heroic. Further, the common Macedonians, the rank and file of the army, were as important as any other factor in the campaign's great success. The division of credit, however, was a zero-sum game.⁴⁴ The greater the emphasis on Alexander's uniqueness and Heroic stature, the less their own stake in glory. The common soldiers who served under Agamemnon or Achilles were nameless, invisible. And the men had loved Philippos.

On the other hand, we ought also to consider the confusion that Alexander's sudden Divine sonship will have caused. The notion that a Divinity could and did visit mortal women and beget offspring on them was perfectly acceptable in Greek religious thought. It was taken by many as fact. But this fact belonged to ancient history. Nothing like it had happened for many a generation. The spartan admiral Leutychidas was some twenty names distant from Zeus, and had lived

a full century and a half before Alexander.⁴⁵ No wonder that many, not least the Macedonian soldiers, found it hard to accept such a major religious innovation, a theological shift of enormous proportions and significance.

The accounts we possess concerning Alexander's consultation of the oracle show that he indeed recognized the challenge, and acted to address it. The solution he offered was anchored at the very heart of Greek religious tradition. Most writers relate that Alexander asked the oracle whether he had punished all the murderers of his father. The priest of Ammon warned him that such words were sacrilegious, but assured him that Philippos was properly avenged. The point is clear: even after receiving recognition as the son of Ammon, Alexander still referred to Philippos as his father.⁴⁶ That the priest should have made the correction is understandable; his loyalties were firmly fixed and had nothing to do with Macedonia or with her former King.⁴⁷ Alexander is made to accept the correction, but also to receive a satisfactory answer to his inquiry. The story that gained currency sends a clear message: Alexander did not forsake Philippos, persisted in calling him his father, and took great care to make sure that his murder was avenged.⁴⁸

Alexander could hardly have renounced Philippos altogether. By doing so he would have lost his Argead connection, and with it his claim to the throne of Macedonia and to the command of her army. That was unthinkable. Instead, he conformed to the best tradition of Greek Myth. Alexander was to be the son of two fathers, one human, one divine. This was true of Herakles himself, and of another mythical precedent, Theseus. Widely recognized as the son of Aigeus, he was also the son of Poseidon.⁴⁹

There were few witnesses, if any, to the exchange between Alexander and the priest of Ammon. The fact is that the account we have, whether authentic, adjusted or fabricated, presents Alexander as a traditional Greek Hero. Accordingly, any objection to Alexander's new status will not have arisen on theological grounds. The premise of dual paternity was conservatively traditional. The revolutionary aspect of Ammon's declaration was that it was now ascribed to a living person. Alexander's death made it much easier to stomach the new religious reality.⁵⁰

The status of Alexander's paternity receives very different mythical representation in the *Alexander Romance*.⁵¹ In this version Alexander is not the son of Philip, nor of Zeus-Ammon, but rather of Nektanebo, the last Pharaoh of independent Egypt. Anticipating a Persian attempt to regain control over Egypt, the historical Nektanebo first helped raise a revolt against the Persians in Canaan. But the revolt was

crushed, and soon a Persian *grande armée* under the personal command of King Artaxerxes III appeared at his doorstep. Nektanebo first retreated to his northern capital at Memphis, then to his southern one at Thebes, finally to disappear from the stage of history in Nubia, perhaps in 342/1. By this time Alexander was already an adolescent; within a few years he would join battle for the first time. Thus, the claim concerning Alexander's Egyptian paternity lies well outside the Myth's historical kernel.

Like the Nektanebo of history, his mythical namesake is also the last King of Egypt. He, too, is warned against a massive invasion from the East. But instead of military preparation and international intrigue, the *Romance's* Nektanebo shuts himself up in his magical laboratory and consults the Gods. To his surprise, he discovers that the ancient Gods of Egypt, who have always aided him in the past, are now directing the ships and armies of the enemy! Doom is inevitable. Nektanebo shaves his hair and beard, fills his pockets with gold, and flees his motherland—not southward to Nubia, but rather northward, to Macedon. His subjects, amazed at the mysterious disappearance of their King and dismayed by the Persian onslaught, turn to the Gods for help. They are informed that their King, who has fled Egypt, shall return one day to lift the Persian yoke. But he will not return as the old man whom they have known, but as a youth. Perplexed at this prophecy, the Egyptians write its essence on the pedestal of Nektanebo's statue.

The story picks up again with Alexander's arrival in Memphis, where he is crowned as Pharaoh and sits on the throne of Hephaistos-Ptah.⁵² Following his coronation he notices the inscription on Nektanebo's statue, and inquires about its origins. On hearing the story (and recalling the presence of Nektanebo in his childhood), he joyously embraces the statue, and recognizes the Pharaoh's paternity. Alexander's only wonder is how so powerful a magician was ever overthrown by the Persians. surely, this turn of events is best attributed to the will of the Gods.

A salient feature of the story is the emphasis on the continuity of the Royal line between the last Pharaoh of the thirtieth dynasty and the young Macedonian conqueror. The establishment of this connection was used to legitimate the status of Macedonian rule in Egypt, yet at the same time it also enhanced Alexander's divine status. The visit to siwah confirmed Alexander *historicus* as the son of a God. With the identification of Alexander *mythicus* as the biological son of Nektanebo, Alexander became a legitimate Pharaoh. According to Egyptian lore, every living Pharaoh was an incarnation of Horus, a major divinity in his own right.⁵³

The association of Alexander with Horus adds a new dimension to

his relationship with Herakles, seeing that the Egyptian God himself was sometimes identified with the Greek Hero.⁵⁴ This process of identification is manifest in the fascinating case of Herakleopolis Magna, an ancient capital of upper Egypt.⁵⁵ This city, by Alexander's time already two millennia old, witnessed a process of double syncretism, evolving around the memetic model of a father-son relationship. The father was a divinity combining aspects of Ra and Osiris; the son was a composite of Herishef (yet another Egyptian deity identified with Herakles) and Horus. The city's Egyptian name—*Hwt-nn-nswt*, “Town of the King's Child”—exemplifies the Royal-Father-and-son meme. When the ancient city finally received a Greek name, the figure chosen to represent the sacred King's son was none other than Herakles.

The significance for Alexander is inescapable. By recognizing him as a true Pharaoh the Egyptian priesthood also identified Alexander as yet another incarnation of Horus. Long before Alexander's arrival in Egypt “the child-god assumed the central place in the mystery of the divine birth; [...whose] aim remained that of assuring the legitimate succession of power.”⁵⁶ This is exactly the function of the *Romance* version of Alexander's paternity. By pronouncing him to be the son of the last Pharaoh the myth not only asserts his position as Egypt's lawful master, but locks him into a syncretistic matrix in which he stands as an avatar of both Horus and Herakles. This notion is very much a part of the myth's historical kernel. This identification, with all its political and theological ramifications, was openly a part of the Egyptian priesthood's agenda. Alexander, who spent a whole winter in Egypt, could not have remained oblivious.⁵⁷

WRESTING A PROPHECY

Another episode connecting Alexander and Herakles is the story of the young Macedonian's confrontation with the Delphic Pythia. The story appears in a number of tellings. According to Plutarch (*Alex.* 14.6-7), after he was chosen *hēgemōn* of the Greeks in their campaign against Persia, Alexander sought consultation with the God in Delphi concerning the expedition. As chance would have it, he arrived there on a day when the oracle was inactive. Undaunted, Alexander summoned the prophetess, and when she refused to cooperate, he forcefully dragged her to the temple. shocked and annoyed (or perhaps amused?), she said, “You are invincible, my son.” Alexander expressed his satisfaction with this utterance and departed.

The violent extraction of a prophecy from the Delphic oracle is, of course, highly unusual in both myth and history. In fact, there is only one precedent for such impudent behavior: Herakles' confrontation

with the Pythia Xenokleia, and consequently with Apollo.⁵⁸ After the mad slaying of his wife Megara and their children, Herakles was driven mad with evil dreams, and sought a cure.⁵⁹ Coming to Delphi, he was refused an answer by the Pythia. Herakles became livid, and threatened to take away the sacred tripod (according to one version he actually snatched the tripod and carried it off to Pheneos in Arcadia). Consequently, Apollo appeared on the scene and a scuffle ensued. This continued until Zeus himself decided to intervene and tore the rivals apart. The story ends with a reconciliation between Zeus's two sons, who even proceed to found a city together.⁶⁰ Important to note, the story was not perceived as blasphemous in anyway. On the contrary, the scene appeared on a white marble relief in the temple of the Mistress in Akakesion, Arcadia. Even more telling, an artistic representation was dedicated at the very site of the drama in Delphi.⁶¹

A more elaborate telling appears in the *Romance* (A, 1.45). This telling, too, takes place in an oracular temple of Apollo, but this time in the sicilian town Akragas. As in Plutarch's story, Alexander's request for a prophecy is refused by the Pythia. The angry Alexander then declares, "If you do not wish to prophesy, I too shall carry off the tripod, just as Herakles carried off the prophetic tripod of Phoibos!"⁶² He is answered by a mysterious voice, coming from the innermost part of the sanctuary: "Herakles—O Alexander!—committed this act as one God against another; but you are mortal: do not oppose yourself to the Gods. Your actions are talked of even as far away as heaven." The Pythia, quick to interpret the words of her divine master (and using word-play to change their meaning in Alexander's favor), offers something of her own: "The God has addressed you himself, by the mightiest of names. 'Herakles, O Alexander,' he called you, thus indicating to you that you are to exceed all other men by your deeds and to be remembered through the ages." The message of the story is clear: Alexander acts with Divine favor and supervision; his status is similar to that of Herakles; and like Herakles he is destined to win eternal fame.⁶³

The story, even in Plutarch's more modest version, displays obvious mythical characteristics. Yet the Pythia's prophecy of invincibility, at least, may have something to do with history.⁶⁴ According to Diodorus, when Alexander was contemplating the difficult campaign to the lands of the Ganges, he took encouragement from the utterance of the Delphic oracle, as well as from Ammon's promise of world empire.⁶⁵ The underlying assumption of Diodorus's statement is that, however it may have been obtained, a prophecy of invincibility was in fact delivered to Alexander. Of course, one cannot rule out the possibility that the prophecy was invented on the banks of the

Hypbasis, in order to persuade the reluctant troops. Even so, it nevertheless testifies to Alexander's "Invincible" status already in his lifetime. Further proof that Alexander boasted of his invincibility derives from a contemporary witness, the Athenian orator Hypereides. In his speech against his countryman and rival Demosthenes, he accused the latter of wishing to install in Athens a statue of King Alexander *Anikētos Theos*, that is "God Invincible."⁶⁶

The connection of Alexander's invincibility with Herakles seems natural enough. To begin with, one is hard pressed to remember a story where Herakles is beaten in a violent conflict. His eventual downfall is achieved by trickery, not might. secondly, Herakles himself bore the title *Anikētos*. The earliest evidence comes from the seventh century B.c. spartan poet Tyrtaios.⁶⁷ In later times this epithet became closely attached to the Hero's name. It has even been suggested that this connection owes much to Alexander's influence.⁶⁸ Thirdly, the "Anikētos" meme serves not only as a Heraklean epithet, but is also given to one of his Olympian sons, borne to him by Hebe.⁶⁹ This detail, too, may have been replicated from the Alexander myth to that of his great ancestor.

THREE ANECDOTES

A mirror image of same memetic process is visible in the mysterious episode of Alexander's son from Barsine, namely Herakles. This is not the place to enter the dispute whether this historical character was actually a son of Alexander, or a pretender trumped up by Polyperchon, a playing card in the power struggle of the successors.⁷⁰ Either way, the incident is highly instructive. If Herakles was indeed Alexander's son (and presumably named by him), the choice of name is positive proof of the close familial ties envisioned by the Macedonian. After all, it was common Greek custom to name a firstborn son after his paternal grandfather. If, however, Herakles son of Barsine was a pretender, his name is just as revealing. Polyperchon or his agents gave their pretender a name to make him as believable as possible. Their choice would thus reflect the public perception of the intimate relationship between Alexander and Herakles. such perception derives from Alexander's behavior and sentiment during his lifetime.

One icon of this sentiment was the statue of *Herakles Trapezios*—the sitting Herakles.⁷¹ Like the better known 'Iliad of the cask,' this statue of Herakles accompanied Alexander on his long campaign. While the notion of Alexander carrying with him a graven image of his ancestor and half-brother sounds perfectly plausible, one must also consider the possibility that it was invented by a creative art dealer, who wished to

increase the value of the merchandise at his disposal. As in the case of Barsine's son, a forgery would be just as telling as fact. To give one's selling pitch a better chance, one would have to invent a plausible story. Alexander would be the obvious choice as lure for the naïve buyer.

But Alexander not only kept Herakles' effigy as his companion. On occasion he even dressed up like him! This intriguing piece of evidence for the strong impression of Herakles on the mind of Alexander comes from a contemporary witness, Ehippos of Olynthos, who testified that Alexander used on occasion to dress up as various divinities. These included Herakles, who was represented, not surprisingly, by the ubiquitous lion skin and club.⁷² Some doubt has been cast on the historicity of Ehippos's report, but this seems to be founded on prejudice, supported by very slender evidence.⁷³ In fact, Alexander was not alone, nor was he the first to don the lion skin and carry the club. There is at least one story, from about a generation before Alexander, of a prominent Greek who used to dress up in a Herakles costume.

We have seen how, some twenty years before Alexander's conquest of Phoenicia and Egypt, the two lands revolted from the Persian Empire. The Great King, in need of help, turned to Greece. The Argives sent him the most powerful contingent by far, three thousand strong, but did not choose a general. To fill that position the King made a special request. He asked for one Nikostratos, "for this was a good man in both deed and council, but in his wisdom there was mixed a mania. For since he excelled in bodily strength he imitated Herakles in military campaigns and wore the lion skin and club to battle."⁷⁴ Yet this was no lunatic. Nikostratos was a respected general in his native Argos whose name had reached the ears of the Great King, who, in turn, took this Herakles-impersonator seriously enough to entrust him with an army, and proved to have made a good choice. In the campaign against Nektanebo he took a decisive part in the action, and helped secure Persian victory.⁷⁵

Nor was it mere pride in his physical prowess that made Nikostratos assume Herakles garb. Some time before the Phoenician campaign he had suffered from a grave illness. All other physicians had given up hope, except for Menekrates of Syracuse. This extraordinary man possessed great powers of healing, so much so that he called himself Zeus, and proclaimed that his abilities as a physician made him "solely responsible for the life of men."⁷⁶ Regarded as somewhat of a strange bird, Menekrates was apparently also an effective healer. He cured men of the "sacred diseases," not before he made them sign an agreement making them his slaves, should the treatment prove

successful. In addition to Nikostratos-Herakles, he also had in his “Olympus” a Hermes, an Apollo and an Asklepios. This behavior by Nikostratos was, therefore, an act of pious gratitude, not of lunacy.

An anecdote from Nikostratos's life illuminates further his reverence for Herakles. When Archidamos of sparta, another major player in fourth-century Greek politics, tried to convince him to betray the stronghold of Kromnon in return for the hand of any Lakonian woman he should choose (the Royal Ladies excepted), Nikostratos replied, “You are no descendant of Herakles. For he was going around chastising evil men, while you make the good wicked.”⁷⁷

This fascinating phenomenon of syncretistic self-Divinization may well have been witnessed by Alexander. According to Hegesandros of Delphi (second century B.c.), Zeus-Menekrates exchanged letters with King Philippos, demanding recognition as Zeus, and at one point even attended the Macedonian court with his entire entourage of divinities.⁷⁸ Philippos's intention, so Hegesander says, was to ridicule Menekrates; indeed, by the end of the banquet he and his companions had to flee the court in shame. The story of Menekrates' visit to Pella may perhaps be a myth, but his example was fully historical. Even if Alexander did not see Menekrates and his “Olympians” with his own eyes, he was certainly in a position to hear stories of a Nikostratos, the successful general, who had dressed up and gone to battle as Herakles, and did so out of deep devotion.

The phenomenon of Herakles-impersonation was hardly unique. Another contemporary example is, of course, that of the Athenian athlete Dioxippos.⁷⁹ since we do not know at what point in his life Alexander first started dressing up as various divinities, we cannot say whether he imitated Dioxippos, or vice versa. A second example, likewise of uncertain date, was set by the Macedonian architect Deinokrates. Wishing to interest Alexander in his grand design to make a humongous statue out of Mt. Athos, he decided that the best way to ingratiate himself with the young King was to dress up as Herakles. Alexander was impressed by Deinokrates' approach, but declined his offer.⁸⁰ Another, later, example comes from the court of King Antiochos. A person there by the name of Themison used to dress up as Herakles, and even had some sort of worship.⁸¹ All this lends greater credibility to Ehippos's story. Divinity-impersonation seems to have been an integral part of Alexander's *Zeitgeist*.⁸²

GRAVEN IMAGES

Another, more concrete, example of the conflation of Alexander's image with that of Herakles appears on the Macedonian's new coinage.⁸³ scholars of earlier generations have argued that the facial

features of Herakles on Alexander's coins were actually Alexander's own. Thus, by creating this "crypto-portrait," Alexander allegedly combined his own visage with the hallmark lion skin of Herakles, giving perhaps the first hints of his future attempts to divinize himself. The recent generation of scholars, interested for the most part in finding out what Alexander really looked like, maintains that the face on the coins does not belong to the young King, but rather represents contemporaneous artistic perceptions of Herakles himself.⁸⁴

However, in the present context it may be more profitable to ask not "What did Alexander really look like?", but rather "What did the handlers of the new coins think about the identity of the man in the lion-skin hat?" A positively documented answer is impossible. Yet if we consider that most of the people who eventually used the Zeus-Herakles coins had never seen Alexander (and if they have, then for a short while and from a distance), in conjunction with the confusion that these coins have caused even among expert numismatists and art historians (who have at their disposal both a wealth of *comparanda* and the time and inclination to reflect upon them), we may surmise that the same kind of confusion occurred already in Alexander's own time. In other words, once the coins were minted and went into circulation, their users could attribute the face under the lion skin either to Herakles or to Alexander—or to both of them simultaneously. This ambivalence of identity may well have been intentional.

Much less ambivalent is the artistic portrayal of Alexander as Herakles on the famous sidon sarcophagus.⁸⁵ This outstanding relic of ancient art represents on one of its long sides a detailed battle scene between Macedonians and Persians, probably the battle of Issos (the immediate basis for the rise of Abdalonymos, the sarcophagus's owner and final resident). The fight is feverish and disordered, both sides having broken ranks. At left we see a mounted Alexander, without armor or shield but wearing a lion-skin helmet, stretching his right hand backwards and getting ready to pierce a Persian enemy with his now-lost *sarissa*. Alexander's determined facial features speak volumes. "His compact, densely modeled face and its powerful chin, pursed lips, strong nose, deep-set eyes, 'clouded' brow, and cauliflowered ear are complemented by the staring mask of the lion, whose incisors frame his forehead and whose eyes stare up and out into the battle. All are outspoken metaphors of force, characterizing him as the living reincarnation of his ancestor Herakles."⁸⁶

This representation of Alexander is especially telling, since it is fantastic in nature. Alexander did not ride to battle in Issos wearing a flimsy shirt, nor did he sport a lion skin on his head. The fact that the artist who produced the sarcophagus (or the sidonian king who

ordered it) chose this particular image of Alexander thus testifies to the high degree of identification between the two figures. This impression is supported by yet another statue, known as the 'Tivoli head,' in which Alexander "is cast in the mold of his great ancestor Herakles."⁸⁷ It is not surprising, therefore, that this Alexander was found in the ruins of the Hero's sacred precinct.⁸⁸

THE ECUMENICAL HERO: AN INTERPLAY OF MYTHS

We have already seen that in some instances the interplay between Herakles and Alexander was not unilateral. In the story concerning the colony of the siboi the reality of Alexander's campaign contributed to the myth of Herakles. Indeed, it is not impossible that all of Herakles' adventures in the East are a product of his sudden appearance at Prometheus's cave among the cliffs and ridges of the Hindu Kush. In other words, Alexander's "eastern adventure" meme was replicated in the Herakles myth. An even more decisive case where the reality of Alexander enhanced and developed the myth of his great ancestor appears in a remark by Strabo, in regard to the origins of a certain Libyan people—the Pharousioi.⁸⁹ This people was said to have descended from Indians who had been brought to Africa by Herakles following his Indian campaign. Not surprisingly, this detail does not appear in any of the standard (or even obscure) tellings of the Herakles myth. In all likelihood, this addition to Herakles' myth cycle was inspired by Alexander's history (that is, his presence in India; nothing is known of any transfer of population between the two continents). It is highly unlikely that Pharousioi, Maurousioi, or anyone else in Libya would conceive of making a claim to Indian origins before Alexander.

The same is true of a remark by Servius concerning a visit by Herakles to Ammon while on his way to India.⁹⁰ Interestingly, Servius indicates that the story was secondary to a competing version, which made Dionysos the visitor. While Alexander's trip to Siwah purportedly took place following an earlier visit by Herakles, not even Kallisthenes spoke of such a visit by Dionysos.⁹¹ The coupling of these two figures—both were Alexander's half brothers; both had a major influence on him in real life; both were said to have preceded him in the East—demonstrates how their respective myths came under the influence of Alexander's history.

A more complex demonstration of the same principle appears in the legendary itinerary of the Spartan lawgiver Lykourgos. Wishing to distance himself from his newly reformed mother city, Lykourgos reportedly left Sparta and took to traveling. Among his destinations were Asia Minor, Crete and Egypt, all easily within the realm of

possibility for a Greek of the archaic period. However, one Aristokrates son of Hipparchos, a spartan author of the early imperial era, extended his tour to Libya and Iberia, and even to India, where Lykourgos is said to have met the famous Indian gymnosophists.⁹² A plausible explanation for this outlandish assertion would be that Aristokrates borrowed Libya and Iberia from Herakles' myth and added them to Lykourgos, yet another descendent of the great Hero. The addition of India and the gymnosophists is clearly a result of Alexander's association with Herakles.⁹³

The identification between the historical Alexander and Herakles was so powerful that it exerted an influence on Herakles' myth. The same is true of the mythical Alexander. Some stories about the legendary Alexander, which apparently have no connection with the exploits of the historical figure, bear a striking resemblance to parallel stories about Herakles. Indeed, the two Heroes sometimes play quite similar, almost interchangeable roles. Once such example comes in a story by Diodorus, about Herakles, Atlas and the Hesperides.

The Hesperides, or Atlantides, were the seven beautiful daughters of Atlas and Hesperis. Living in chastity and bliss with their father, they aroused the desire of Bousiris, the Egyptian King, who sent pirates to abduct them. The pirates successfully kidnapped the girls, but also had the misfortune to meet Herakles one day, just about lunchtime. The Hero killed every last one of them, and returned the girls to their father, who was so grateful that he happily taught Herakles all his discoveries in the field of astrology. Nor were these discoveries a mere trifle; he was the one to discover the "sphere of the stars," and by way of honoring his achievement it was said that he carried the universe on his shoulders. Thus, when Herakles had returned to Greece, he disclosed to his compatriots the spherical theory (that is, that the world was actually round) and gained much fame thereby; he was even said to have accepted the universe from Atlas.⁹⁴

Alexander plays a similar role in a very different cultural context. The Jewish *Mishnah* gives the following signs for the recognition of idols (as opposed to harmless statues): they may be holding a rod, a bird or a ball. Rabbi Yonah (early fourth century C.E.), one of the sages who produced the *Eretz-Israeli Talmud*, offered the following interpretation: "Alexander of Macedon, when he desired to ascend to heaven, was rising and rising, and he rose up until he saw the world as a ball and the sea as a bowl; this is why they depict [the statue] with a ball in its hand."⁹⁵ Rabbi Yonah refers here to the famous scene from the *Romance*, where Alexander, wishing to discover whether he had reached the end of the world, ordered two huge carrion birds to be yoked to a large ox-skin bag. The birds were prevented from eating for three whole days, at the end of which Alexander climbed into the

bag holding two long spears, with horse-liver at their tips; the famished birds soared up to catch the liver, and elevated Alexander with them. Having reached a considerable altitude, and already shivering with cold, Alexander encountered a flying man, who admonished him for trying to reach the heavens. The mysterious man instructed Alexander to look down; he then saw the world in the shape of a threshing floor and the sea curled around it like a snake.⁹⁶

The two stories may seem far apart at first, but closer consideration reveals a parallelism. The connecting point is the discovery of the world's roundness. The assumption in both stories is that, according to common opinion, the world is flat. Hence, both stories make their respective Heroes reach *the end of the world*. Herakles marked his end of the world with the famous Pillars. Alexander ordered the construction of his flight-apparatus as means of discovering whether the end of the world was anywhere near. Heroes reaching the end of the world are rare in Greek mythology. One thinks of the Argonauts, but they are not credited anywhere with discovering that the world was round. Nor, as far as I know, is anyone else. Under these circumstances, the two stories come closer together. Alexander seems to have been for Rabbi Yonah what Herakles was said by Diodorus to have been for the Greeks: the discoverer of the “spherical *logos*.”⁹⁷

In his far-reaching travels, so far-reaching that they brought him to the end of the world, Herakles did more than gain personal fame or improve mankind's knowledge of astronomy. His grand *oeuvre*, the Pillars, were world-renowned in antiquity.⁹⁸ Diodorus relates that Herakles “built out both the promontories...to a great distance; consequently, whereas before that time a great space had stood between them, he now narrowed the passage, in order that by making it shallow and narrow he might prevent the great sea-monsters from passing out of the ocean into the inner sea.”⁹⁹ According to other reports, so says Diodorus, he did the exact opposite, that is, cut a pathway between Africa and Europe, the two continents having previously been joined. Herakles thus plays a double role, as both trailblazer and averter of evil.

The mythical Alexander followed suit. somewhere in the East he brought together two mountains, the Breasts of the North, and built a gate between them, to shut a host of marauding barbarian nations out of the civilized world, the *oikoumenē*.¹⁰⁰ The historical Alexander never built any such gate. At the site of the original Caspian Gates, a fortification of this nature would make very little sense, as it would block the passage to a major satrapy.¹⁰¹ Alexander never reached the Caucasus (the real one, between the Caspian and the Black sea). Nevertheless, the story, as well as the confusion between the two sites, became common.¹⁰² Josephus told of a raid of Alani which passed

through the gates. A few years earlier the emperor Nero planned an expedition to the area and had a new legion recruited for this purpose. He appropriately called it *Alexandri Magni Phalanx*.¹⁰³

The theme of Alexander as fortifier of the civilized world against evil reappears in a new locale nearly two millennia after his death, in the seventeenth-century travel book of Evliya Efendi, son of Constantinople's master of goldsmiths.¹⁰⁴ Writing about the military station at Top Khánah, he says:

In the time of the Infidels [it] was a convent situated in the middle of a forest; this is the mosque called the mosque of Jehángır: as it was dedicated to saint Alexander the Infidels visit it once every year on the feast of this saint. A tradition says, that Alexander, Zúkkarnín, enchained at this place magicians and witches from Gog and Magog by throwing mountains on them with the incumbence to take the sea during the forty winter days in brazen ships in order to watch the sea surrounding Constantinople; but those demons having cut the mountains, which shut up the Black sea, it broke in by the Bosphorus and the demons were all buried in the Black sea. Thus the foundation of Top Khánah is carried back to Alexander.

This artillery station was set in place to ward off the menace presented by the Emperor of the Germans, a nation of “warlike, cunning, devilish, coarse infidels,” true heirs to the skythians held back by the Caspian Gates of the Caucasus.

The journey to the end of the world, and the contribution to cosmological knowledge and to the general defense of mankind fit our two Heroes well: both are ecumenical characters, their Mission world-embracing. Herakles set out on his *tour de Méditerranée* from Crete, an island well-placed for campaigns to all parts of the inhabited world.¹⁰⁵ The first stage of the operation involved clearing wild beasts from Crete itself; the second took him to Libya, where he eradicated both wild animals and wicked men. The land of Libya was reclaimed for humanity.¹⁰⁶ Nor did Herakles labor for Greeks alone. Diodorus's Herakles benefits Libyans, Egyptians and a host of other nations.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, he goes about his business in an unmistakably Greek fashion, introducing the staple vine and olive to uncultured, uncultivated Libya, but he does so for the sake of Libyans, not Greeks.

Plutarch's *De Fortuna Alexandri* casts Alexander in a very similar role. Like his ancestor and predecessor, Alexander, too, teaches agriculture to the barbarians.¹⁰⁸ But his Mission includes much more. Alexander is the common governor and moderator of all mankind. Furthermore, he is sent on his Mission by God.¹⁰⁹ In his domain all men should consider the *oikoumenē* as their fatherland, and the distinction between Greek and Barbarian is based not on one's custom or costume, but on moral grounds alone. Greekdom is characterized by *aretē*, Barbarism by badness.¹¹⁰ Plutarch paints a picture of cosmic

theology: a Divinity had sent Alexander's soul into this world, like a sunray, to illuminate all of mankind. That portion of the earth which had not basked in Alexander's light now remains in darkness, as if it had never known the sun.¹¹¹

According to Plutarch, in the short time allotted him Alexander was hindered at every step by a formidable opponent—the Goddess Tychē. she never missed an opportunity to strike at him, and, unlike Athena before Menelaos, she guided every blow to the most vital and vulnerable parts. Lesser men would have succumbed or been destroyed, but not Alexander. Like Herakles alone before him, he braved every challenge and beat every foe. No other scion of the Gods, but this pair of great Heroes—Herakles son of Zeus and Alexander son of Ammon—could ever overcome Tychē's malignancy (341b-f). The two are set apart even from the realm of the Heroic, both mythical and historical. Cyrus and Agesilaos, Themistokles and Philippos, Brasidas and Perikles, Agamemnon, Achilles, Diomedes, Odysseus and solon, Miltiades and Aristides—all possessed some outstanding quality which made them great. Yet Alexander equaled and outstripped them all (343a-d).

Plutarch's Alexander is thus a more-than-worthy successor to Herakles. Like his ancestor, he is a fearful foe and a great warrior, but he has gone a step further. Herakles was set on his task of capturing lions and scaring off birds by the hubris of an evil man, and was thus prevented from exercising his boundless talent in the service of a greater cause. Alexander, on the other hand, was driven to action by Aretē herself. His Mission is both Royal and Divine, its happy completion prevented only by the premature recall of his soul.¹¹² The reader is left wondering. What would the world have looked like, had Alexander been allowed a full life span, if the Mission had been accomplished, if all of humanity had seen the light?¹¹³

Plutarch gives no answer, but his conclusion does offer advice and encouragement. At the very end of the second of the twin speeches (344c-345b) he tells the story of Alexander's headstrong bravery at the town of the Malloi. In the farthest reaches, over the rivers of Barbaria, King and Lord of the world was contending for Greekdom against the wild inhabitants of an obscure fort. As before the walls of Troy, the Gods again took sides: Tychē fought for the barbarians, Aretē for the Greeks. The latter won the day, but at a dear price. seeing their King fatally wounded and lying in agony, his terrified companions burst into tears. Alexander alone kept his composure. "Let none be afraid, even on my behalf," he shouted at them. "How will I be believed not to have feared death, if you fear death for me!" The text ends thus. For reasons unknown, the God did not allow Alexander to complete

his Mission. If Plutarch had any hope for a new savior to follow in the footsteps of Herakles and Alexander, he did not show it here. His final message, in the mouth of his Hero, was to look forward, and fear not death.¹¹⁴

SYMBIOSIS

Possibly from the moment of his birth, certainly to the instant of his death, Alexander lived his life in parallel with that of Herakles. To be sure, he had other Heroic ideals and took to heart the myths of other Heroes and Gods: Dionysos, Achilles, even Protesilaos. Yet it cannot be denied that his rivalry and identification with Herakles played a central, decisive role in his life. The idea, the stories, even the effigy of Herakles accompanied Alexander throughout his wonderful and terrible adventure. Wherever Alexander went Herakles was right there with him, serving as a useful tool in diplomacy, reassuring him in times of peril, opening up unfamiliar territory and, most importantly, providing a constant yardstick to measure his own progress along the unrelenting path to immortal fame.

This parallelism created a unique interplay of myth and reality. On the one hand, Alexander's emulation of Herakles became a crucial factor in the unfolding of his personal history. The two key incidents in that respect are the siege of Tyre and the visit to Siwah. In Tyre Alexander established the special bond with his ancestral Hero, focused on magnificence of achievement, personal tutelage, the audacity and capacity to challenge world order, and possibly also a level of self-identification, even incarnation. At Siwah the all-important theme of Royal Divine sonship became inextricably entwined in Alexander's history, as well as in his myth.

On the other hand, the connection established in the realm of history carried over into myth, with the stories of the two figures becoming involved in a dynamic process of mutual influence. At the same time that the myth of Herakles had a very real effect on Alexander's history, that very same history helped reshape the Herakles myth. Were it not for Alexander's campaign, we should hardly expect to find stories of cities founded by Herakles using discarded soldiers as colonists, of deportations of Indians and their resettlement in Africa, even of a visit to Siwah *en route* to adventures in the East. One cannot even be sure that Herakles would have had any eastern adventures at all, had he not been discovered there by Alexander.

The close association of Alexander and Herakles is apparent not only in the world of words, but also in the realm of graphic representation. The huge quantities of coins minted by Alexander,

displaying Herakles' features and special weaponry alongside his very own name, gave rise to a long-enduring question: Whose face is it on the coin—Herakles' or Alexander's? Now as then, the point is not in how one answers the question, but in the fact that one needs to ask it in the first place. This point will have been all too clear to any banquet guest who had seen Alexander dressed up in a lion skin and brandishing a club.

Finally, as a result of the symbiotic relationship between Alexander and Herakles we find them fulfilling similar functions in the realm of myth, in the most detached of literary contexts. Thus, due to their innate ecumenical nature, both figures appear as discoverers that the world is spherical, in sources which do not betray the faintest sign of mutual influence. In memetic terms we should say that stories about the discovery of the world's roundness were more easily replicated when told *àpropos* either Alexander or Herakles.

Yet the two are more than mere explorers. The adventures of both Heroes not only take them to the ends of the civilized world, but also depict them as the champions of humanity against the barbarity and chaos that reign beyond. For Herakles, this has always been an indispensable part of his myth; for Alexander the role of “Defender of Humankind” is defined by the literal meaning of his name (“Alexandras” in Greek means “defending men”).

As long as humanity is not radically changed and history continues to run its course, such world-saving Heroes must always suffer some fateful flaw. Neither can be allowed to complete his Mission. The mythical Herakles obviously did not rid humanity of every kind of trouble. Wild animals and wicked men still abound, despite his noble efforts. Nor did the mythical Alexander achieve his purpose—to unite humanity under the enlightened rule of Hellenism. His empire collapsed in a farrago of internecine warfare, and whatever world vision he may have had was relegated to the realms of myth and scholarly speculation. Both world saviors are thus prevented from fulfilling their Missions by the envy of Gods and men. They are cut down in their prime, leaving behind them a grieving humanity to tell and retell their stories.

* A Key term in our discussion, *aretē* can be translated as “goodness,” “excellence,” “valor,” “bravery,” “moral virtue,” “distinction,” or “fame” and can encapsulate all these meanings at once.

Amazon Queen

In the first half of this book we have followed the close relationship of Alexander with the myth of his ancestral Hero, Herakles. We have seen how the constant contact with the memory of Herakles served as encouragement in war, but also as a tool in diplomacy. In general, it provided a yardstick against which Alexander (and his contemporaries) could measure his achievements, and at the same time supplied the means to come to terms with them. Most importantly, the comparison of Alexander's successes with those of Herakles both legitimized and encouraged his eventual deification.

One of the fascinating aspects of this relationship is its organic evolution. The initial association was dictated by the hereditary claims of the Macedonian Royal family, but the unraveling of the story owes as much to circumstance as to predilection or calculation. This close memetic alliance had a double effect: on the one hand, it both reiterated and enhanced the Herakles cycle, taking it to new lands and adding original detail to the old familiar stories. On the other, it greatly encouraged Alexander's own mythologization.

One explicit example of Alexander's live mythologization is the story of his meeting with the Queen of the Amazons. A full-blown myth, involving traditional mythological creatures (the Amazons) on the one hand and the very real Alexander on the other, it nevertheless appears not merely among the wild fancies of the *Alexander Romance*, but in the conventional historical accounts. Furthermore, according to Plutarch, some of the authors who told the story (and others who denounced it as fiction) were contemporaries of Alexander; indeed, some even took part in his campaigns.¹ It is thus worthwhile to investigate the origin and manifestations of the story. But first, let us tell it afresh.²

When he was campaigning in northern Iran (in the land then known as Hyrkania), having just recovered his much-loved horse, Boukephalos, from the hands of Mardian raiders, Alexander received news that the Amazon Queen Thalestris was near, escorted by three hundred female warriors. Messengers went back and forth between the two camps. Alexander inquired what was on the Queen's mind, and she made a direct reply: childbearing. Alexander, she said, had shown himself to be the best among all men through his deeds, while she was outstanding among women in prowess and manliness.³ She was also very beautiful. The offspring of two such illustrious parents was bound to be extraordinary. If she bore a boy, she would send him back to Alexander; a girl she would keep herself. The Queen's logic was astute, her charms irresistible. Alexander put a halt to the campaign and granted her wish. They spent thirteen days dallying around in the camp, until it became manifest that the Queen had been impregnated. Alexander then honored her with worthy gifts, and sent her on her way.

That Alexander should meet an Amazon is hardly surprising. To begin, he was the descendant of both Herakles and Achilles. These two (together with Theseus and Bellerophon) were the Greek Heroes most closely associated with Amazons. Secondly, in a journey to the East, which for a crucial while presented itself as a struggle of Hellas against the Barbarian, a meeting with the Amazon Queen—one of the ultimate “others” in the Greek experience, as we shall see presently—was practically unavoidable. We should have wondered if such a meeting had *not* been reported.⁴ Yet this story also raises a number of questions about its genre, provenance, plotline and purpose. These questions stand at the heart of this chapter.

A strange thing has happened in the discourse concerning the Amazons, for in other topics a separation is maintained between the mythical and the historical: what is ancient, false or fantastic is called myths, while history desires the truth, be it ancient or recent, and does not admit the fantastic, or only scarcely. But concerning the Amazons the same things are told now as in days of yore, things that are fantastic and beyond belief.

This observation by Strabo (11.5.4) attacks the issue of genre and poses the age-old question of the relationship between myth and history. Amazons are mythical creatures. A meeting of Alexander with their Queen is perfectly plausible as a myth, yet we find it embedded in historical works. How did this fantastic episode enter the historical tradition? What had sparked its invention?

The question is an old one. In his chapter on Alexander's meeting

with the Queen Plutarch sets out a full-blown historiographical debate on the question. Furthermore, this debate began already with the first-generation historians. At least six contemporaries of Alexander—five of them were also his companions—referred to the Amazon Queen in their works: Polykleitos, Onesikritos and Kleitarchos related the story, while Aristoboulos, Chares⁵ and Ptolemy said it was pure invention.⁶ To reach a conclusion we must consider the debate between these authors, but before we turn to it, further ground needs to be cleared.

Plutarch's words, cited above, have been interpreted to mean that Ptolemy and Aristoboulos did not refute the story or call it an invention, but rather ignored it altogether.⁷ This view is extremely hard to accept. First, on account of the Greek, which is very explicit:⁸ the supporters of this view bring no parallel to show that the words of Plutarch may be construed as silence rather than refutation. second, the assertion that Arrian's omission of the Amazon Queen story testifies to a similar omission in Ptolemy and Aristoboulos (a mainstay of the argument under discussion) is both strained and dangerous. Arrian may have chosen to remain silent on the Amazon Queen for any number of reasons. There are certainly other, more believable, episodes which he did not recount, and which do appear in other surviving sources.⁹ Furthermore, Arrian could have chosen to leave out the Amazon Queen precisely *because* his two most reliable sources condemned it as a lie.¹⁰

Strabo is also cited as evidence that “the most truthful historians of Alexander say nothing about the episode.”¹¹ Now, in his account strabo indeed offers a tripartite division of Alexander's historians: those who care most for the truth denied the story; the most trustworthy ones said nothing whatsoever about it; those who told the story did not agree in detail.¹² Yet there is no particular reason to assume—on the basis of strabo's division alone—that Aristoboulos and Ptolemy should belong to either category. Plutarch, on the other hand, puts them in the first group. Further, while strabo does distinguish between deniers and ignorers, Plutarch does not.¹³ Nothing in his text calls for a distinction between Aristoboulos and Ptolemy on the one hand, and Chares, Antikleides and the rest on the other. Finally, the silence of such important authorities as Aristoboulos and Ptolemy may, *in extremis*, be used to argue *ex silentio*. Not so the silence of Philon the Theban.

The conclusion of this exercise in source critique is thus not only that the Amazon Queen episode was a part of the first-generation historical narratives, but also that it involved all but one of the major writers.¹⁴ Whence comes the Amazon story, and why does it masquerade as history? scholars have looked for the historical grain behind this fanciful fiction in the offer of a skythian princess to

Alexander (the offer was made by the damsel's father, a skythian king; Alexander refused), or in the elaborate gesture of Atropates, the satrap of Media, who was said to have sent Alexander a hundred women, riding horses and decked as Amazons.¹⁵

Both suggestions are improbable. The former, because the marriage offer is reported by Curtius in terms quite similar to Arrian's, but in a different context: at Marakanda. The visit of the Amazon Queen is located in Hyrkania, a couple of years earlier. It is thus more likely that Curtius's source(s) reported *both* episodes. This in turn renders most unlikely the suggestion that the marriage offer actually provided the inspiration for the Queen's visit. Further, there is no apparent reason why the story should have been transplanted to Hyrkania and pushed back in time.¹⁶

The suggestion that the charade staged by Atropates gave rise to the story of the Amazon Queen is also highly improbable.¹⁷ After relating the story Arrian remarks, "These things were written neither by Aristoboulos, nor by Ptolemy, nor yet by any other writer adequate to make a point concerning such ancient affairs."¹⁸ He directly goes on to explain that the Amazons probably did exist once upon a time, but that they were probably already extinct by the time of Alexander. It is plausible that Arrian did not find the episode of Atropates and the hundred Amazons in any of the contemporary sources, and that it belonged to a later tradition.¹⁹ In addition, as the gesture of Atropates is located by Arrian after Alexander's return from India (324 B . c.), it is even harder to see why it should be dislodged from its original context in both place and time. Clearly, the Atropates episode cannot have been the stimulus for the story of the Amazon Queen.

A more plausible explanation suggests a meeting between Alexander and a local queen or princess, escorted by armed women on horseback.²⁰ The presence of warrior women on the steppes of central Asia is attested by Ktesias, a Greek who marched under Cyrus in the original *Anabasis* celebrated by Xenophon.²¹ This is what he wrote concerning the nation of the sakai:²²

A woman reigned among the sakai, zealous in war and outstanding among the women of the sakai in both daring and deed. Her name was Zarina. On the whole, the womenfolk of this nation are stout, and share in the dangers of war with their men.

This Zarina waged many wars with the neighboring nations, established peace in the land, founded quite a few cities and generally benefited her people. For her efforts she was given a marvelous pyramid-shaped grave, a golden statue and Heroic honors. so at least

Ktesias, based (according to his own testimony) on the records of the Persian Kings.

Another famous case of a mighty warrior Queen in the same part of the world is that of Tomyris, queen of the Massagetai. sole ruler of her people after the death of her husband the king, she came under attack from Cyrus the Great. The Persian King, so the story goes, first asked for her hand in marriage. Realizing that this was a mere ruse in order to wrest the kingdom away from her, she refused. The angry Cyrus marched to war against the Massagetai and their Queen, and was at first successful, thanks to sage advice from the Lydian Kroisos and to the barbarians' unfamiliarity with Persian delicacies and wine. However, when the two armies were put to the test, the Persians were routed and Cyrus was slain. In revenge Tomyris sought out Cyrus's body, and baptized his head in a skin full of blood.²³

If indeed Alexander and his men met such female warriors, a not unlikely premise, they must have called them Amazons. A Greek did not have another word for armed women riding on horseback. Indeed, it will not have occurred to him to look for one. It appears, therefore, that the visit of the Amazon Queen was spawned by a historical (albeit unreported) happenstance.²⁴

When did such a meeting take place? Arrian informs us that Alexander spent a period of fifteen days in Zadrakarta, the royal capital of Hyrkania. During this time he made the proper sacrifices to the Gods and entertained his troops with athletic games. This was much-deserved rest, the like of which the army had not seen since it set out from Persis.²⁵ We read of sacrifices and sports, but we should also take for granted music and poetry. Plutarch's story of Kleitos's last supper in Marakanda offers us a comparable context:²⁶ The scene is set at Alexander's lodgings; sacrifices had been made and supper was accompanied by heavy drinking. someone sang the verses of a certain Pranichos (or Pierion), denouncing the poor efforts of certain commanders who have been defeated by the barbarians. This, in turn, led to the outbreak of the fatal fight between Kleitos and Alexander.²⁷ In comparison, we can surely imagine the following scene in Zadrakarta: The banqueters were in their cups. One of the poets who traveled with the army, under the strong inspiration of seeing female warriors with his own eyes and witnessing the meeting of Alexander with their leader, sang about a meeting of the King and the Amazon Queen. The verses got a positive reception, and the story caught on.²⁸

If my reconstruction is accepted, it is easy to see how the Amazon Queen meme would be replicated in the historical accounts of Alexander. The circumstances of a Heroic Greek King on a military expedition to the East as much as demanded such a meeting. The story

will thus have enhanced the entertainment value of the author's literary work. One may also speak in terms of popular demand for the story. since Zadrakarta, people had heard the story told and sung. Now they wanted to read it. The historians, complying with popular demand, inserted this bit of fiction into their histories.

On the other hand, it is also understandable why other authors, who were also present during the campaign, should come out against the story: the more conscientious because it simply was not true, others because they did not think of it first. A vivid example of the story's reception comes in the following anecdote. In the latter days of Lysimachos, when he was already king, the work of Onesikritos was read before him. When the narrator reached the story of the Amazon Queen, the old general smiled and said, "And where was I at the time?"²⁹ Ptolemy, Aristoboulos and others may have been less charitable. This remarkable admixture of fact and fantasy could certainly be popular with the readers, but it also exposed its authors to ridicule.

We should therefore ask not only why this story was reported as history by some of the first-generation historians, but also what their choice signifies. By incorporating the fantastic story of the Amazon Queen in their works, such men as One-sikritos and Polykleitos, who surely knew that they were not writing the literal truth, were not merely fawning on the reading public; they were adapting themselves to the new realities around them. We have seen how Alexander's campaign shattered the distinction between the mythical and the historical. The discovery of Prometheus's cave, the outshining of Herakles at Aornos, a journey to the end of the world—not to mention the recognition of Alexander as son of Ammon—were not fable or fantasy: they were events of the realm. A little exaggeration in the matter of a local warrior queen pales in comparison.

Yet this story is remarkable not only for its presentation as history, but also for its highly unusual plotline. When Herakles set out to obtain the girdle of Hippolyte, he was at first met with a positive reaction. The Amazon Queen was impressed with him, and promised to comply with his request. However, ever-jealous Hera assumed the shape of an Amazon and started to spread a rumor that the Greeks were trying to abduct the Queen. Armed Amazons rushed on horseback to the ships, and Herakles, suspecting foul play, killed Hippolyte and any of her friends who tried to come to her aid.³⁰ The story of Achilles and his own Amazon, Penthesileia, ends on a similar note. Arriving on the scene after the death of Hektor, the brave Amazon fights on the Trojan side, killing many a brave Greek, until she finally comes face to face with the bravest, fastest, handsomest of all Greeks. In the ensuing duel Achilles slays Penthesileia, only to find

out that he had taken the life of the woman who could have been his match. some even say that he consummated his passion for her when she was already dead!³¹

These two stories are representative of how Amazons generally fared in Greek myth. Their usual lot was rape, violent death, or both. Amazons existed to be confronted. To quote a recent scholar, there was “no future in being an Amazon.”³² Yet Alexander's story develops in the opposite direction, in that it lacks the most common component in all other Amazon stories: violent confrontation. Alexander does not attack the Amazons like Herakles, nor does he rape any of them; he is not a champion of civilization (that is, of Athens) against the Barbarian like Theseus, and there is no epic single combat such as between Achilles and Penthesileia. Not even a girdle is stolen. Instead, Alexander treats the Amazon Queen with regal honor, grants her wish (for thirteen days continuously!), then sends her home with appropriate gifts. Unlike any other Amazon story, this one looks forward to a happy future: the Queen had been impregnated and a mighty progeny would spring from the strongest, bravest, most illustrious mother and father of their time. If there is indeed no future in being an Amazon, how can we explain the fact that a future is exactly what Alexander offers Thalestris?³³

To answer this question, we must look at the meaning of Amazons. Long before Alexander, the Amazons had come to symbolize (for Athenians, at least) the essence of eastern barbarity.³⁴ One example comes from Plato's *Menexenos*:³⁵

Wherefore the forefathers of these men and of us [...] having been reared up thus in complete freedom, and being nobly born, achieved many noble deeds, [...] deeming it their duty to fight in the cause of freedom alike with Greeks on behalf of Greeks and with barbarians on behalf of the whole of Greece. The story of how they repulsed Eupolemos and the Amazons, and still earlier invaders, [...] has been adequately celebrated in song by poets who have made it known throughout the world; [...] but those exploits for which as yet no poet has received worthy renown [...] I ought to celebrate, not only praising them myself but providing material also for others to build up into odes and other forms of poetry in a manner worthy of the doers of those deeds. And of the deeds whereof I speak the first are these: The Persians were in command of Asia, and were enslaving Europe, when they came in contact with the children of this land...

The same sentiment is expressed even more clearly in the *Panegyrikos* of Isokrates:³⁶

But it seems to me fitting that I should speak also of the city's achievements against the barbarians, the more so since the subject which I have undertaken is the question of who should take the lead against them. [...]Let us single out,

then, the races which have the strongest instinct for domination and the greatest power of aggression—the skythians and the Thracians and the Persians; it so happens that these have all had hostile designs upon us and that against all these our city has fought decisive wars. [...]Now, while the most celebrated of our wars was the one against the Persians, yet certainly our deeds of old offer evidence no less strong [...] for while Hellas was still insignificant, our territory was invaded by the Thracians, led by Eupolemos, son of Poseidon, and by the skythians, led by the Amazons, the daughters of Ares—not at the same time, but during the period when both races were trying to extend their dominion over Europe; for though they hated the whole Hellenic race, they raised complaints against us in particular, thinking that in this way they would wage war against one state only, but would at the same time impose their power on all the states of Hellas.

The implication is manifest: the expeditions of the Amazons and the Thracians against Attica were conceived as both mythical counterpart of and historical precedent to the Persian wars. Isokrates unraveled the common thread running through the barbaric Asiatic nations, which tried in their hate of all Hellenes to spread their dominion over Europe. The political conclusion of his worldview was to try and foment war between Greece and Persia. Plato, taking a similar point of view, aspired to supply future poets with the material to weave tales about the Persian wars—a topic as worthy and as grandiose as the epic battles of ancient Athens.

All this was highly relevant to Alexander and his men. setting out from Europe, the Macedonian King had championed the cause of Greece against Persia. Only months before his alleged meeting with the Amazon Queen he excused the burning of Persepolis as vengeance for the destruction of Attic temples.³⁷ But new times called for new measures. The Persians, once the hated enemy, were now to become loyal subjects and even to have a share in power. With the death of Darius, the original purpose of the expedition seemed to be complete, the chapter of revenge closed.³⁸ A new chapter had begun, and in it old mythical imagery received new meaning: the Amazons would no longer be the archetypal enemy of past days; they had now become a vehicle of reconciliation and harmonization.³⁹

This shift in Alexander's purpose and state of mind is elucidated clearly in the so-called vulgate tradition. In the accounts by Diodorus, Curtius and Justin the episode featuring the Amazon Queen introduces a new, disturbing (from the western point of view) feature of Alexander's reign—his orientalism. Alexander brings attendants of Asiatic stock into his court, admits Persians into the closest circles of his friends, puts on the Persian diadem and dons Persian regal garb. He even takes over the grand harem of Darius. Lest he appear alone in these vices, he exhorts his friends, even the common soldiery, to participate in them. Complaints and indignation are silenced with

expensive gifts.⁴⁰

Yet the notion, common to the vulgate authors, that after the death of Darius Alexander felt secure on his throne and that, free from danger, he eagerly plunged himself into Persian luxury,⁴¹ is not borne out by the facts. To begin, the war for control of the Persian empire was far from over. When Alexander was on the move again, he received news that Bessos, in his Bactrian stronghold, had also assumed the Persian royal insignia. Many Persians flocked to him, and he was awaiting reinforcements from his skythian allies.⁴² In light of this information, Alexander's actions in imitating the Persian Kings take on new meaning. A new, powerful contestant now arose, competing with Alexander for the allegiance of his Iranian subjects. The struggle for the throne was to last at least one more round. Alexander's new modes of behavior, whatever personal pleasures they may have afforded him, aimed to shore up Persian loyalty. This was seen by Plutarch, who described Alexander's orientalism as a process rather than a sudden moral collapse, and stated plainly that the purpose of these changes was to create harmony and understanding between his old subjects and his new.⁴³ In other words, Alexander thought his Persian subjects might harbor more positive feelings towards him, if he showed deference towards their *mores*.

The accidental meeting with the strange oriental warrior queen thus proved highly serendipitous, providing the right conditions for a new twist on the old Amazon story. It fitted the circumstances admirably. Alexander had just started wooing his new subjects by donning their dress and indulging in some of their royal customs. At the same time he was doing his best to mollify the offended Macedonians. This newest addition to Amazon mythology related the rapidly changing situation in familiar terms, which in turn could help Alexander's Macedonian and Greek soldiers cope with change, even embrace it.

Of course, in reality Alexander did not marry anyone in Zadrakarta. Yet marriages between Macedonian men and oriental women were a standard feature of everyday life during Alexander's expedition. The men had spent months and years away from home. To some, their European wives were a distant memory; others had never married. Naturally enough, many among the file and rank had taken Asian wives along the way. By the end of Alexander's campaign this practice had given birth to a whole generation of mixed descent, for whom the camp was a mobile metropolis.⁴⁴

Then there were Alexander and Roxane. Whatever personal feelings he had for the Bactrian princess, their marriage was presented and perceived as a means of blunting both the humiliation of the conquered and the haughtiness of the conquerors, and of facilitating a favorable atmosphere for power sharing by the two nations.⁴⁵ Nor was

this practice limited to Alexander, as he strongly encouraged his friends to take Persian wives themselves. By the latter part of his reign, the Macedonian elite had all become involved in marriage with Persian princesses.⁴⁶

Finally, one of the items in Perdikkas's presentation of Alexander's last plans (to which we shall return in the [next chapter](#)) included "the exchange of bodies from Asia to Europe, and *vice versa* from Europa to Asia, in order to bring these two great continents into a state of harmony and friendly kinship by means of marriage and familiarity".⁴⁷ It matters little whether this particular item on Alexander's agenda was real or fabricated. If real, it testifies to Alexander's state of mind. If fabricated, it sets out what the forger thought would be credible as Alexander's state of mind. Either way, the inclusion of this item among the last plans indicates that interracial marriage was perceived by contemporaries as a means of creating a union between peoples, cultures and continents.

The story of the Amazon Queen thus has a distinct political message. Unlike those of his great ancestors, Herakles and Achilles, the story of Alexander's meeting with the Amazon Queen does not feature confrontation and hostility, but rather cooperation and familiarity. Through this fresh telling of the Amazon myth Alexander demonstrated not only his independence from the conventionalities of Greek mythology, but also his revolutionary political vision. This vision broke down after Alexander's death, as his empire disintegrated in endless wars and the Iranian nobility was pushed out of any position of power. Yet may we not presume that the persistent adherence of historians to the myth of Alexander and the Amazon Queen reflects a certain longing for that short period of time, in which the dream of a united empire of West and East, ruled by a virtuous Alexander and joined by all men of merit, seemed about to come true?

Post Mortem

Alexander's death caught the world by surprise. Indeed, he was a relentless fighter and a heavy drinker, but he had escaped death so many times before, that he looked practically immortal.¹ Many fates now hung in the balance: of empire, of immense fortunes, of personal careers and innumerable lives. And so did Alexander's myth. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the King was the chief author and promoter of his own myth. After his death, the band of flatterers, "those men who have always afflicted the affairs of kings and will never stop doing so,"² was left in the lurch, bereft of its patron. Henceforth the future of Alexander's myth, pregnant as it was with wide-reaching theological ramifications, would be determined by memetic evolution. Like any other myth, it would be molded by political interest, religious sentiment, cultural proclivity and the indefatigable desire to tell a good story.

The fate of Alexander's myth depended on the depth of the impact made by Alexander the living man. There could be no denying that his incomprehensible campaign was the result of a personal quest. This was no automatic, or even logical, development of Macedonian history. Yet history in general has provided us with many examples of theological (and other) revolutions, which did not survive the people who had put them in motion. When Akhenaten died, his revolutionary Monotheism was swept aside and buried in the deep recesses of Egyptian memory.³ When Julian the Apostate died, the Roman Empire reverted back to Christianity, forsaking forever its polytheistic inheritance. Thus, the first crucial moment in the independent life of the Alexander myth (and consequently of the religious revolution it entailed) followed closely upon the death of the historical person. The reactions of Alexander's erstwhile friends, now his Successors, would

determine the fate of his attempt to transcend the normal bounds of humanity. To these we now turn.

THE STAMP OF PERDIKKAS

On his deathbed Alexander handed his signet ring over to Perdikkas.⁴ With it came great power and responsibility, but also great dangers. The question of inheritance and succession was extremely complex, and Macedonian history, changed irretrievably by Alexander, offered no appropriate precedent on which to rely. From now on, there would be “constant intrigue, constant negotiation, constant compromise.”⁵ The exact details of this intense bout of maneuvering cannot possibly be retrieved. With so many players in the game, each with his (and her) own agenda, it is clear that the short accounts given by our sources are mere condensations of events, giving only the general gist of things. Yet at least one of the accounts, that by Curtius, preserves what appears to be the earliest measures used, then and later, to establish and entrench Alexander's superhuman status.

One such example comes from what Curtius (10.6.4) presents as the first public meeting held after Alexander's death. In preparation for this meeting Perdikkas set the Royal throne in plain view of all, and placed on it the deceased King's diadem, his robe and his weaponry. He then added to these Alexander's ring, given to him the day before. The symbolism of these gestures is clear enough—the throne was vacant, but Perdikkas publicly refused to ascend it, returning authority to its rightful source. Yet this measure is open to interpretation in more ways than one. The vacant throne not only symbolizes the obvious political vacuum, but also implies the presence of its former occupant. This impression will have been enhanced by the display of his personal belongings—the diadem, the robe, the weaponry. These were the trappings of power, but also the relics which came in closest contact with Alexander's body. The notion that the vacant throne should become the rallying point for any consultation from now on was taken up by Ptolemy at the same meeting (10.6.15). A few years later Eumenes of Kardia would make excellent use of the same logic, and the same relics, in order to garner support from Alexander's men.⁶

The sense of vacancy created by Alexander's elevation was augmented by Perdikkas's speech. The death of Alexander was indeed a disaster, but an understandable one. If one were to consider the magnitude of his achievements, one could certainly believe that the Gods had loaned such a man to humanity, only to return Him to His own kin once His part was done.⁷ To be sure, the short Latin text given by Curtius can hardly be the exact translation of Perdikkas's *ipsissima verba*. The notion that Alexander belonged to Divine stock

and was recalled on the completion of his Mission may well represent the understanding of the first century c.E. On the other hand, nothing in the speech as we have it contains anything that *cannot* have been said at the time, and it is also quite possible that Curtius merely refashioned for his own work the material supplied by his sources. It is thus at least within the realm of possibility that the idea of a Divine Alexander, sent to earth for a limited time, then returned back to His rightful place among the Gods, had already been expressed very soon after his death.⁸

The next sentence of Perdikkas's speech marks yet another relic which was to play a major role in the ensuing struggle for power—Alexander's corpse. That sole remain of the dead King is singled out as a focal point of legitimacy and reverence.⁹ The perceived importance of the body is borne out by the following events. When violence soon broke out, Perdikkas's immediate response was to shut the room where it lay, but to no avail. The preliminary round of the terrible civil war which was soon to follow broke out in that very room, in the presence of the corpse. More auspiciously, and perhaps for the last time, the mention of Alexander's body was used by his brother Arrhidaios to help pacify the situation somewhat.¹⁰

Finally, when public order had been restored with Perdikkas firmly in charge, the King's friends at last found the time to care for his body. Yet despite the fact that it had been lying around unattended in the burning heat of the Mesopotamian summer, it was found fresh and undecayed. The embalmers, both Egyptian and Chaldaean, who were assigned the task of preserving the body, were afraid to approach it.¹¹ In all likelihood, this is a made-up story. But who made it up? Judging from the internal logic of Curtius's account, and from the fact that the body remained for a long while in Babylon, and thus in Perdikkas's control, it seems likely that the story emerged from the inner circle of his friends and associates. The motive for this spurt of creativity remains obscure (perhaps to make up for the fact for the body was indeed neglected and then recovered in a sorry state?), but its implications are clear: even Alexander's body, the one thing that separated him from the Divine, was not subject to the rule of Nature.¹²

The theme of Alexander's special relationship with Herakles also plays an important role in securing the continuation and acceptance of Alexander's myth after his death. After successfully bringing power into his own hands, and following the distribution of the satrapies to the leading generals and officers (which assured the loyalty of this nobility to central rule, at least temporarily), Perdikkas, now regent and protector of King Philippos, set about to annul the validity of Alexander's papers, the so-called 'last plans.'¹³ What Alexander

actually intended to do next, as well as the actual contents of his private notebooks (the *hypomnēmata*), remains a mystery. “The pyramid to Philip and the march round more than half the Mediterranean coast [...] maybe *like* Alexander in his final stage—but we cannot be sure they were Alexander's own. We simply cannot tell how much was genuine and how much plausible invention and distortion, by men who knew him for men who knew him.”¹⁴

Fortunately, we do not have to decide here whether any particular plan was indeed devised by Alexander. Whether true or fabricated, some of these plans fit remarkably well with the picture painted in the previous chapters, most credibly so, the plan to go on an expedition “against the Carthaginians and the others residing along the shores of Libya and Iberia, as well as the neighboring coastal land as far as Sicily; and to build a road along the shores of Libya all the way to the Pillars of Herakles.”¹⁵ Having reached the boundaries of Herakles in the East (and surpassed them), Alexander would now proceed to do the same in the West.¹⁶

The last plans and wishes of Alexander demonstrate yet another aspect which characterizes his mythology: the notion of dual paternity. Alexander's human father, Philippos, was to receive a grave in the shape of a pyramid, about equal with the largest of those in Egypt, reckoned among the seven wonders of the world.¹⁷ This enormous honor, however, would not in the least detract from Alexander's respect for his Divine Father, in whose desert dwelling the King wished to be buried.¹⁸ This pattern of double paternity and Divine Sonship, which formed such an important part of Alexander's mythologization in life, thus received an official stamp in his last will and testament.¹⁹

THE PROPAGANDA OF PTOLEMY

Alexander originally meant to be entombed in Siwah, but history dictated otherwise. Perdikkas, chief executor of his will, ordered that he be buried at Aigai, the old Macedonian capital. On its way there, however, the magnificent procession which escorted his body was hijacked by Ptolemy and led to Egypt. There the coffin rested for a while in Memphis, and was ultimately removed to Alexandria, where it was laid to rest in a grand tomb, befitting the grandeur of Alexander himself.²⁰ Aggravated by Ptolemy's intervention, Perdikkas prepared to invade Egypt. This campaign, held in part in order to recover Alexander's body,²¹ was the first major clash between Alexander's successors. It sparked a series of wars, which devastated Alexander's empire and took two generations to quell.

As we have seen, the importance of Alexander's body had become

apparent very soon after his death. To begin with, it was a huge source of prestige. The possession and proper burial of a dead King's body was perceived in Macedonian eyes as legitimating for his heir.²² Yet Alexander's body was far more than a source of prestige or a tool for gaining legitimacy. It was the body of a Hero,²³ and as such could be expected to have supernatural qualities. Thus, for the believer it was valuable not only as a symbol of political continuity, but also as a physical object which possessed considerable innate powers.²⁴

First proof of this fact had already been offered in Babylon by the body's miraculous resistance to heat and decay. There is no reason to doubt that this myth was actually believed by many contemporaries. The human psyche is certainly capable of suspending rational thought and behavior, especially in the context of people and events who appear larger than life. Yet even for those skeptics who refused to believe in the story—Curtius himself is a good example²⁵—Alexander's body could prove quite useful. They might not believe that a corpse could lie uncured for a whole week in the scorching heat of Babylonia and not show the slightest sign of rot or discoloration. But if others could believe it, they would believe it could work other miracles as well.

That the corpse of a Hero could work miracles was neither novel nor surprising, as the following story from Herodotus shows.²⁶ Some time around the middle of the sixth century the Spartans were at a loss. The war against Tegea was going very badly. They had originally set out to war with warm encouragement from the God in Delphi, but the words of the oracle were turned against them—a disastrous yet somewhat comic case of misinterpretation. Since then, defeat and humiliation. They sent again to Apollo, to inquire whom of the Gods they should propitiate in order to conquer the enemy city. The Pythia replied:

In Arkadia lies Tegea in a level plane.
By strong compulsion winds there rage—ever breathe the twain
And blow will always follow blow, bane will follow bane.
There life-giving Earth lays hold of Agamemnon's son;
Bring him away thence and Tegea will be won.

This time the gist of message, at least the last two lines, seemed unmistakable: Orestes, the son of Agamemnon, lay buried in Tegea; in order to win mastery over that city the Spartans had to recover his body and give it a proper burial in Sparta. But where were they to look for the body, and what was the meaning of the strange instructions? Once more the Spartans were at a loss, until one Lichas (a retired cavalryman who, according to Spartan law, devoted his first year as a civilian to activities in the public good), happened to visit an iron smithy in Tegea. Lichas was astonished by what he saw there: the

man was fanning the fire using two bellows and hammering away at the hot iron. When the smith perceived Lichas's astonishment he stopped his work. "What, Lakonian stranger, you marvel at this? I'll give you something better. Some time ago I was digging in my back yard and found of body of a man, seven cubits tall!" Lichas understood immediately: twin bellows breathed air, the blows were the hammer's; the iron was baneful, as it brought mankind only woes. There was no doubt that the body of Orestes had been discovered at last. Lichas leased the courtyard—the smith wouldn't sell—and after a while dug up the body and made away with it back to sparta. That was the end of Tegean resistance to Spartan territorial expansion.

This explanation of the vicissitudes in the long struggle between Sparta and Tegea was recorded by Herodotus about a century before Alexander's time. It shows clearly the importance attributed to the final resting place of a Hero's body. Nor is it a unique case. A comparable story of a Hero's bones being discovered and brought back to his city is told by Plutarch. After the Persian War the Athenians—again, at the instigation of the Delphic oracle—sought for the remains of Theseus in the island of Skyros, where he had been pushed to his death from a cliff. With the help of a large bird of prey and divine insight Kimon was able to locate the body, which was then conveyed to Athens and laid to rest in its own sacred precinct.²⁷

Another such example can be seen in Sophocles' *Oedipus in Kolonos*. Oedipus was to be buried in Athens, and the exact location of his grave was to remain a secret, kept even from his beloved daughters. Thence he would defend Athens from the *Spartoi*, the Theban dragon-spawn.²⁸ Finally, according to Polyainos, when the Athenians tried to settle *Ennea Hodoi*, they had received an oracle requiring them to bring back the bones of Rhesos from Troy and bury them in his native city. The Athenian general Hagnon succeeded in this quest, and ensured the survival of the new Athenian settlement, which he named Amphipolis.²⁹

Like that of Orestes, Oedipus, Theseus or Rhesos, Alexander's body, too, could be expected to have similar powers. Indeed, a story from the *Romance* (3.34) testifies to such belief: after the death of the King the Macedonians and the Persians quarreled over his body. The latter wanted to bring the body to Persis and to make obeisance to it there as Mithras, while the former wanted to convey the body to Macedonia. Ptolemy suggested an arbitration by the oracle of Babylonian Zeus, to which suggestion both sides agreed. Zeus replied that Alexander was to be buried at Memphis in Egypt. With everyone's agreement Ptolemy escorted the body to Egypt, and was duly met in Pelousion by a festive crowd of Memphitai. Yet the arch-prophet of the temple at Memphis objected. "Take him to the city he had founded

at Rhakotis,” he said, “for wherever his body may lie, that place shall never cease to be troubled by wars and battles.” And so it was that Ptolemy buried Alexander with great outlay in the city of Alexandria, where his grave was still to be seen.³⁰

The burial of a founding Hero in the city of his foundation was, of course, common practice. Human founders of cities, even ones of lesser stature than Alexander, received Heroic honors and were buried in a special *temenos* (a sacred precinct) within city limits. No doubt, they were thought of as protective and beneficent powers.³¹ In that respect, Ptolemy's final decision to lay Alexander to rest in Alexandria carried with it a twofold blessing: not only did it provide him with a general advantage over the other Successors, it also singled out Egyptian Alexandria among the many other Alexandrias, seeing that only this city could boast the tomb and last resting place of its glorious founder.³² The great benefits reaped from the possession, burial and celebration of Alexander's body (or, at least, the way in which they were envisaged) were emphasized by Diodorus: “therefore he [Ptolemy] prepared a sacred precinct, appropriate in its size and formation to the glory of Alexander; and having buried him and paid honor to him with Heroic sacrifices and lavish games, he reaped rich rewards not only from men but from the Gods as well.”³³

Ptolemy used more than Alexander's body in his efforts to legitimize his power in Egypt. From his defeat of Perdikkas's invasion in the late spring of 320, to his own coronation about a decade and a half later, Ptolemy issued several series of coins, featuring Alexander with an elephant scalp.³⁴ Naturally, these coins take us back to the mysterious Mir Zakah medallion. If this unique specimen is indeed authentic (as I assume in [chapter 3](#) above), “this find would change everything we think we know about the development and use of the portrait of Alexander on coins.”³⁵ The obvious consequence in the present context would be that Alexander's elephant scalp was not Ptolemy's invention, as is universally assumed today, but a borrowing from an existing coin, minted a few years earlier, in Alexander's lifetime.

Yet even if we denude Ptolemy of this claim to originality, there still remains his all-important choice to use this particular type on the coins of the realm. To begin, the Mir Zakah medallion will have been issued as a commemorative coin for a specific event, and thus in very small numbers. It could serve as currency, but was more likely meant to be a souvenir. Ptolemy's coins, on the other hand, were issued in large quantities and were intended as the main currency of the Egyptian economy.³⁶ As such, they passed through many hands, and exposed the symbols minted on them to many eyes. Thus, even if the original idea for Alexander with an elephant scalp does not belong to Ptolemy, the decision to use it as a symbol of power on his widely

circulating currency is certainly his.³⁷

The rest of the iconography used on the new coins is also highly indicative. The elephant scalp does not come at the expense of Ammon's horn, still visible despite the impressive headgear. Around Alexander's neck we find the scaly aegis, an attribute of Zeus. The use of these images signals Alexander as the son of Zeus-Ammon, by using symbols which identified these two Divinities in both Egyptian and Greek contexts. This combination of symbols thus sends a message similar to the one in the *Romance* legend about Nektanebo and Alexander: the figure of the Macedonian world conqueror is used to bring together the Hellenic elements of Macedonianruled Egypt with ancient local traditions.

The most outstanding feature of this new coinage is obviously the elephant scalp which decorates Alexander's head. Clearly, this image was meant to put Alexander on the same plane as his ancestral Hero: "As the lion scalp is to Herakles, so is the elephant scalp to Alexander."³⁸ By choosing this particular type for his new coinage Ptolemy both ratified and openly advertised Alexander's successful emulation of Herakles. In so doing he also acknowledged Alexander's superhuman status. The parallelism with Herakles, in conjunction with the horns of Ammon, signified Alexander's Divine Sonship. Two all-important aspects of the Alexander myth thus became widely current everywhere in early Ptolemaic Egypt.³⁹

THE DREAMS OF EUMENES AND DEMETRIOS

The disaster of Perdikkas in Egypt and his assassination by his own men left his faction in dire straits. The man in charge was now Eumenes of Kardia. A strange bird among Alexander's successors, he was not only a Greek but also had started his career as a secretary, becoming a general only after Alexander's death. His best hopes lay with the *Argyraspides* (silver shields), Alexander's invincible crack unit. However, their two commanders, Antigenes and Teutamos, proud Macedonians that they were, found it extremely hard to receive orders from a lowly Greek. In this difficult hour, Eumenes turned to the memory of Alexander in order to secure the cooperation and loyalty of his men. Now, since Alexander had only one body (which Ptolemy had already secured for himself), Eumenes resorted to a stratagem on the other extreme, and conjured up the dead King's ghost!⁴⁰

The idea came to Eumenes in a dream (or so he told anyone who asked). In the dream he saw Alexander himself in full regal attire, presiding over the council and managing affairs of state. If Eumenes and his men followed this example, Alexander would be there with them, in spirit if not in the flesh. And so it was. A Royal Tent was

erected, and in it was placed a golden throne, complete with the diadem, the scepter, the crown, Alexander's armor and the rest of the regal insignia. In addition, an altar was installed, on which Eumenes and the rest of the officers offered incense; they also made obeisance to the empty throne.

Did Eumenes really dream about Alexander? And what of Teutamios and Antigenes—did they believe in Eumenes' story that Alexander had appeared to him in a dream, or did they just go along with it to save face all around? Here as elsewhere, it is impossible to enter the mind of a historical character. We may, perhaps, offer a cynical interpretation of Eumenes' production of Alexander's tent; the sources certainly tend that way.⁴¹ Two inferences can be drawn, however, with a greater degree of certainty. First, that Eumenes' stratagem seems to have been inspired by Perdikkas's actions in Babylon. The use of the vacant throne as a diversion from the difficulties of leadership is too similar to be coincidental; and Eumenes was, after all, one of Perdikkas's men.

The second inference is that however cynical Eumenes may have been, his story must have commanded wide belief among the *Argyraspides* themselves. Not only did this corps of highly opinionated and independent soldiers accept Eumenes' effective command, but they also complied with the new protocol for the war council. Again and again they convened in the Royal Tent, beheld the various regalia, prostrated themselves in front of Alexander's empty throne and offered him incense as to a God.⁴² Such an arrangement could not have been so useful had it not enjoyed wide appeal among the troops, perhaps among the officers as well. For many men, the presence of Alexander in the Royal Tent was as real as could be.

Nor was Eumenes the only Successor who saw an epiphany of Alexander in a dream. Shortly before the battle of Ipsos, as the story goes, Demetrios too dreamt about Alexander. In his dream the King appeared before him in brilliant armor and asked him what watchword he intended to issue for the following day. "By Zeus and Nike," said Demetrios. "Well, then," replied Alexander, "I'm off to your enemies, for they will receive me."⁴³ Sure enough, in the ensuing battle, possibly the most important turning point in the entire war of the Successors, the army of Antigonos and his son Demetrios was routed and their power broken.

Whence exactly this story originated is hard to say. It is certain, however, that both Seleukos and Lysimachos made much of it, putting the combination of Alexander and Nike on the coins they issued after the battle.⁴⁴ Such coins will have reminded their users of Demetrios's dream and of his infelicitous choice against Alexander, thus detracting

from his appeal and charisma.⁴⁵ Many such users were Antigonid veterans, now enrolled in the armies of Seleukos and Lysimachos; at least some will have retained a dangerous sympathy to their erstwhile leader.

In any case, this story has a decisive implication not only in politics but also in the field of religion. In his dream Demetrios is required to choose between Zeus and Alexander as a companion for Nikē. This choice should hardly be taken for granted, as it presents both figures as belonging to the same caliber.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the outcome of the battle proved not only that Alexander and Zeus stood on the same level, but that as patron on the battlefield the Son was stronger than the Father! For both Seleukos and Lysimachos to have capitalized on this story, it must have been widespread and earned the goodwill, if not the belief, of a large audience. The success of both Successors relied on this sentiment and enhanced it. It appears that in the generation after his death Alexander won for himself the name and reputation of a major player in the realm of the Divine.

THE RISE OF SELEUKOS

Judging by our meager sources—sad remnants of a much greater, but now lost, body of literature⁴⁷—it was Seleukos, of all the Successors, who was best aware of the major theological shift created by the life and death of Alexander. We have already seen how he put the story of Demetrios's dream to good use after the victory at Ipsos. He did much more.

In the year 312, following the defeat of young Demetrios at Gaza at the hands of Ptolemy, a window of opportunity opened for Seleukos. Antigonos was away in Asia Minor, and the road to Babylon, Seleukos's former satrapy, lay open. Ptolemy was willing to lend some support: a thousand infantry and three hundred cavalry according to Appian, eight hundred and two hundred respectively in Diodorus.⁴⁸ Even given Appian's numbers, this force was hardly strong enough to wrest Babylon from the hands of Antigonid supporters. Seleukos's friends comprehended the situation and their mood was anxious and uneasy. Realizing this, Seleukos gave them a speech of exhortation:⁴⁹

“We, who have fought along with Alexander and were promoted for our *aretē*, need not face up to business putting all our trust in force and money. Rather, we should benefit from experience and intelligence, through which Alexander, too, accomplished great and wondrous deeds. And we should also put our trust in the foretelling of the Gods that the end of this expedition would be worthy of the attempt. For when I consulted the God at Branchidai, he congratulated me as Seleukos King, and Alexander himself came to me in a dream and gave me clear indication of my future leadership, which must perforce come to me in the fullness of time. Besides,” he added, “all beautiful achievements that

A number of themes appear in this speech, through which was woven a net of Alexandresque allusions. These, in turn, were the building blocks of the myth of Seleukos, fashioned after the model of Alexander. *Aretē* is an all-important catchword. Through their display of *aretē*, both Herakles and Alexander had been promoted beyond human rank. The mention of the promotions received by both seleukos and his men, as reward for the demonstration of the very same virtue, has a double impact: first, it creates a sense of succession (*diadochē*) from Alexander to Seleukos and his party; second, it instills the feeling that the aura of superhuman qualities and achievements can be inherited by someone who is deserving. This was especially appropriate considering that at the time of Alexander's death Seleukos was only a minor figure among the throng of generals senior enough to be mentioned in the satrapy-lists. By generously including the men under his command in this *diadochē*, Seleukos gave them, too, a feel of the Heroic. For them, who had taken part in Alexander's wondrous adventure, nothing was impossible.⁵⁰ Furthermore, Like Alexander, Seleukos and his men would not rely on customary resources such as men and money. To their Heroic *aretē* they would add also experience and intelligence.⁵¹

Nor was that all. The God at Branchidai himself had called Seleukos “King.” Surely, that was a clear sign indicating success in their mission. The mention of this particular oracle, belonging to Apollo of Didyma, is of paramount importance. We know on the authority of Kallisthenes that the oracle at Didyma was silent, and its spring dry, from the time of the Persian War down to the arrival of Alexander. This latter event had a salutary effect on the oracle, which became active again, and on Nature herself, which returned the spring to its former liveliness. The oracle had also sent word to Egypt, recognizing Alexander as the son of Zeus and predicting to him some future events, not least his victory at Arbela (that is, Gaugamela).⁵² The analogy is clear. Seleukos, so he claimed before his men, had taken part in the revival of the defunct oracle, receiving there and then recognition as King.⁵³ He thus joined Alexander as a direct beneficiary of the oracle, and came a notch closer to his King and Hero. To bolster these claims, Alexander even gave an endorsement of his own: he appeared to Seleukos in a dream, and gave him sure signs of his future hegemony.⁵⁴

Finally, Seleukos sealed his association and correlation with Alexander by stressing again that only through danger and toil can one attain Alexander-like wonders.⁵⁵ It appears, therefore, that in 312, when Seleukos was finally ready to take the plunge and initiate a

career as his own master, he followed his intent with a strong appeal to the memory of Alexander. Oracles and dreams were marshaled to confirm his claim to a special connection with the late King, and so to legitimize his own role as a worthy Successor.

Yet another example of the molding of Seleukos's myth in line with Alexander's is the famous story of the lost diadem in the marshes. The original story, given by most of the Alexander historians, told of a sailor who jumped into the water of the Babylonian marshes to save Alexander's diadem, which had been blown away by the wind. To keep the diadem dry, the soldier put it on his own head. Alexander rewarded the man with a talent, but also ordered his head to be cut off for his offensive presumptuousness. Aristoboulos, ever loyal to his mission of keeping Alexander's reputation without blemish, replaced the beheading with mere flogging. The story, however, was soon to receive a twist: the soldier was none other than Seleukos himself, and the story came to symbolize not only Alexander's demise, but also the ascendancy of Seleukos (obviously, no beheading or flogging in this telling).⁵⁶ Who invented the story we do not know, but it surely came from the camp of Seleukos. The intention seems obvious enough—to draw a clear line from Alexander to Seleukos and mark out the latter as heir.

But the analogy between Alexander and Seleukos does not stop here. To follow it further we now need to step sideways and back, into the legendary past. When recently married to Antiochos, a celebrated general of King Philippos, Laodike (Seleukos's mother) had a strange vision. It appeared to her that the God Apollo had come to her in her sleep, and that she had become heavy with his child. As a gift she received a ring, decorated with the sign of an anchor. Apollo ordered her to give the ring to their son, and foretold that he would become King in the very place where he should lose it. How great was Laodike's surprise when she awoke, to find that very same ring between the folds of her sheets! She was even more amazed to see a birthmark on her baby son's thigh—it was the sign of an anchor.

Many years later, when the time had come for young Seleukos to accompany King Alexander on his expedition, Laodike gave the ring to her son and told him his true origin. On the campaign, Seleukos lost his ring in the Euphrates, and the sign of the anchor disappeared for nearly twenty years. It resurfaced in 312, when Seleukos was preparing his adventurous expedition to Babylon. Just as he was getting ready to set out, he stumbled against a rock. When dug up, it was seen to be an anchor. The soothsayers, an indispensable part of any Successor's army, were alarmed. "An anchor means delay," they said. "No," replied Ptolemy son of Lagos, the future Pharaoh, "it symbolizes safety." Trusting to this propitious omen, Seleukos

marched on to Babylon. Fortune smiled upon him. After many trials and travails he defeated all his enemies and became King of Asia, successor to the greatest part of Alexander's empire. In his greatness he did not forget the good omen: he always used the symbol of the anchor on his signet ring. Apollo, too, did not neglect his progeny. Both the sons and grandsons of Seleukos still bore the sign of the anchor on their thigh—the God's stamp in the flesh of his descendents.⁵⁷

Attempts have been made to date various parts of this story.⁵⁸ One ought to admit, however, that the traditional tools of *Quellenforschung* are too blunt to deal with this delicate, elaborate question. To do this successfully we should want much fuller and more varied sources. It may, however, be possible to say something in this matter, based on internal and other evidence.

The story of the anchor-shaped rock likely belongs to 312. After all, this is when the events described will have taken place, and as we have seen, Seleukos employed variegated tactics in cheering up his men.⁵⁹ He may very well have stumbled on a rock—an evil omen for a leader setting out on an expedition.⁶⁰ Luckily, the rock seemed to resemble an anchor. The qualms of professional worriers would not be allowed to interfere with a lucky coincidence: Ptolemy's interpretation was much more acceptable. The symbolism of the anchor is unclear. It may have been a family emblem, or it could have had some other significance now beyond our knowledge.⁶¹ If Seleukos did indeed bear an anchor-shaped birthmark (which there is no particular reason to doubt), that may solve the riddle. That his descendents had similar birthmarks is not impossible. This last detail should belong to the decade after Ipsos at the earliest, leaving enough time for grandchildren to be born.⁶²

The most striking part of the story, the Divine Sonship of Seleukos, must belong at the very latest to the early 270s. This is patent from the famous inscription from Ilion, inscribed early in the reign of Antiochos I (Seleukos's son), which decreed prayers by the priests and priestesses of King Antiochos “to Apollo, the originator of his family.”⁶³ The beginning of the inscription describes the difficulties which Antiochos experienced in recovering the entire kingdom of his father in the face of rebellions and civil unrest. It must therefore belong to the earliest years of his reign, putting Seleukos's story of his Divine Sonship very close to his own lifetime.

A second inscription depicts the relationship in even clearer terms: Seleukos is the child of Apollo, begotten by the God.⁶⁴ The context of this inscription is highly revealing: it comprises the opening lines of a hymn to Seleukos.⁶⁵ This hymn, one should note, was added to an already standing inscription, containing a hymn in honor of Asklepios.

At first sight, the juxtaposition seems strange: how does the great honor of a hymn agree with its addition as a postscript to the rear side of a hymn dedicated to another divinity? Did not Seleukos deserve his own stone? The key to the answer lies in the identity and origin of the other divinity, Asklepios. He, too, like Seleukos, was a son of Apollo.⁶⁶ The decision to add Seleukos's hymn to that of Asklepios may have resulted from a wish to buttress Seleukos's new status as Son of a God by reminding the inscription's readership of a mythical precedent. After all, sons of Apollo were much rarer than sons of Zeus.⁶⁷

It thus appears that around the time of Seleukos's death his myth had already reached a form more or less resembling the one given above. The similarity to Alexander is arresting. First, the scene of departure: as the son goes out to war, his mother tells him his true identity—he is not the son of his human, mortal father but of a God. With this revelation comes a mission or a prophecy. For Alexander this came as a directive from his mother to be high-minded in his aspirations as befitted his origin.⁶⁸ Seleukos's prophecy centered on his ring: he would be King in the place where he should lose it. The gift of the signet ring, too, connected the two stories: shortly after wedding Olympias, Philippos dreamed that he had put a seal, in the shape of a lion, on his wife's womb. The story of Seleukos's seal, imprinted as it was in his very flesh, echoes this detail in the story of Alexander's birth. Apollo's gift of a ring to Laodike also echoes the myth of Herakles: as reward for indulging him through a particularly long night (and for bearing Herakles) Zeus presented Alkmene with the gift of a cup.⁶⁹

An even stronger parallel appears in the motif of Divine Sonship. Greek history (distinct from what we call Greek myth) had not known a Son of a God previous to Alexander. To be sure, Seleukos was not the only Successor who received divine worship: Antigonos, Demetrios, Kassandros, Lysimachos and Ptolemy all shared this honor. Yet of this distinguished band Seleukos was the first and only Son of a God. Alexander had set the precedent for a historical Divine Sonship and Seleukos was swift to follow. This no other Successor had done.

Seleukos also followed closely the pattern of dual paternity, established by Alexander on the venerable and venerated examples of Herakles, Theseus and their ilk. To use Justin's words: "When, after the death of Alexander, he [Seleukos] installed himself as King of the East, he founded a city, and there consecrated the memory of his dual origin. For he both called the city Antiochia from the name of his father Antiochos, and dedicated the neighboring land to Apollo."⁷⁰

Taken with the other allusions of Seleukos to Alexander, the depth and intensity of the emulation become manifest. Among Alexander's generals Seleukos was rather low-ranking, compared with the likes of

Perdikkas and Ptolemy, or even Antigonos and Lysimachos. In dire need of a source of legitimacy, he recreated himself as a second Alexander and followed in his footsteps into the realm of Myth.⁷¹

LEGACY

To the degree that the fate of Alexander's myth depended on the Successors, it lay in good hands. This small cohort of political predators balked at nothing to secure their own personal power. The use and reuse of the Alexander myth served them well. Especially useful were those aspects of Alexander's mythology explored in the previous chapters: the gaining of superhuman status through the pursuit of *arete*; the authority and charisma derived from Divine Sonship and dual paternity; the intimate association of Herakles and Alexander;⁷² and finally the belief in Alexander's persistent presence as Hero or God.

It is hard to say to what degree their actions were the result of manipulative cynicism, and to what degree they were moved by piety. To be sure, the appeal to the memory of Alexander was useful and convenient. Yet it is also clear that such an appeal could not have been either useful or convenient had it not touched the right chords in the hearts of contemporaries. The success of the Successors depended to the utmost degree on the loyalty and goodwill of their soldiers. They will have been the primary targets of the numerous incidents of Alexander emulation and reverence. The fact that the successors employed such tactics so profusely testifies to the belief in and acceptance of Alexander's myth.

Nor should this wholehearted adoption of the Alexander myth, with all its religious and mythological ramifications, be seen as inevitable, especially since other parts of Alexander's vision were neglected and set aside after his death. The dissolution of his world empire was perhaps a result of political and military necessity, but the annulment of his last plans—real or fake—indicates that Alexander's wishes were hardly regarded as sacred. Even his wish to be buried with his Father in siwah was rejected. Yet another example is the abortion of Alexander's vision for a brave new world combining East and West, attempted through reliance on Persian nobility and strongly encouraging marriages between high-ranking officers and friends with Asian noblewomen. On the mythic level this vision is symbolized by Alexander's liaison with the Amazon Queen. Alexander's intellectual and religious legacy was not swallowed whole by his successors. Rather, it went through an evolutionary process, which assured the survival only of those elements (or memes) which fitted best the faith,

politics and mentality of those who survived him.

The efforts of the Successors thus bear witness to the impact of the theological and mythological revolution wrought by Alexander, just as they served to ratify and entrench it. The best example is offered by Seleukos, who replicated parts of Alexander's myth, in order to attain himself superhuman status, complete with his own cult and a myth of Divine Sonship. By so doing Seleukos realized the most profound aspect of Alexander's religious revolution: the complete demolition of the line between *spatium mythicum* and *spatium historicum*. Alexander had blazed the path to Divinity, and Seleukos demonstrated that others, too, could follow.

And so they did. *Apotheosis*, the assumption of Divine status by humans, was one of the salient features of Kingship in the Hellenistic age.⁷³ In some cases, as in Egypt, this phenomenon was natural enough. Just as Alexander had stepped into the Divine shoes of the Pharaohs of three millennia, so did the Ptolemies. But the Divinity of the Ptolemies was not merely Egyptian. When Ptolemy I soter had passed away (279 B. c.), his son Ptolemy II Philadelphos had his late father officially deified together with his (third) wife Berenike, and instituted a cult for them both as *Theoi Soteres*, or “savior Gods.” A few years later he instituted a cult for himself, together with his sister-wife Arsinoë, as *Theoi Adelphoi* (“sibling Gods”). Like Alexander, Philadelphos thus came to enjoy both Divinity and Divine Sonship. At the end of the third century Ptolemy IV (Philadelphos's grandson) assumed as his Royal surname the title *Epiphanēs*—that is, (God) Manifest. Divine Kingship and Divine Sonship were thus part and parcel of the Ptolemaic dynasty.⁷⁴

The Seleukid dynasty did not inherit the same kind of religious infrastructure the Ptolemies enjoyed. It thus developed its own methods and rationalization of self-Divinization.⁷⁵ As we have seen, Seleukos I (or his son Antiochos I) propagated the myth that he was actually fathered by Apollo. The claim that Nikator's offspring also carried the sign of Apollo's anchor in their flesh served to reiterate and reinforce their connection with the God. Like the Ptolemies, members of the seleukid Royal house assumed various Divine surnames. In the mid-third century B.C. Antiochos II, Nikator's grandson, openly styled himself *Theos*—“God.” In the second century Antiochos IV, Alexander Balas and Antiochos VI all called themselves *Epiphanēs*—“(God) Manifest”; later in the same century the wife of king Demetrios II was called Kleopatra *Thea* (Goddess). In the early first century there reigned for a short while Antiochos XII Dionysos, the counterpart of his contemporary Ptolemy XII Neos (New) Dionysos. A special place in the list is reserved for Antiochos III “the Great,” who instituted in his entire kingdom an innovative, all-inclusive ruler cult, with the intent

of supplying its varied and far-flung provinces with a cultic common denominator. The insistence of his son, Antiochos IV *Epiphanēs*, upon including *Eretz-Israeli* Jews in this practice brought about the famous outbreak of rebellion and civil war in Judea.

A considerably less-traveled road was the one that led to Divine Sonship. While every King could style himself a God, institute an official cult, and support it with proper financing, it was much harder work to convince people to believe, or at least recount, that he was also born of a God. Infinitely more democratic than a regal fiat, a lasting myth requires a good story to match. Such were not easy to come by for those who trod in Alexander's footsteps.

Seleukos had some success as a Son of a God. Another traveler along the same road was Aratos of Sikyon, the architect of the Achaean League, allegedly the son of Asklepios.⁷⁶ Yet Alexander's greatness was measured, first and foremost, by his military leadership and success. In this respect, it was practically impossible for any of his Hellenistic successors to emulate his achievement. Alexander had descended on the East by surprise. No later Seleukid enjoyed this privilege. Furthermore, in the second century military hegemony passed to the West. Philippos V of Macedon was soundly defeated by the Romans, and soon after him the great Antiochos III. Their sons would see another crushing defeat in Macedonia, and a burning humiliation—without a hand raised—in Egyptian Eleusis. It is thus fitting that the next Divine Son on record is a Roman—the famous Scipio Africanus, the general who finally defeated Hannibal.⁷⁷

The cases of Aratos and Scipio are instructive in regard to their nativity. Both their mothers, so it was told, were visited by snakes and thus produced their illustrious offspring. Now, Greek myth knew a number of ways for a God to visit a human woman in the shape of an animal. Zeus alone could boast an eagle, a swan, a bull, even a shower of golden rain. But the snake was Ammon's and Alexander's. Both these attempts to initiate a myth of Divine Sonship are clearly based on Alexander's precedent. Neither comes near in popularity.⁷⁸

None in the Hellenistic age could surpass Alexander, or even match him. Many could not even emulate him properly. Yet one could always refer back to him in order to derive legitimacy and encouragement. Thus, quite a number of characters during the Hellenistic period claimed descent from the Great Macedonian, replicated various aspects of his myth, or minted coins whose imagery alluded to Alexander's own.⁷⁹ Two Ptolemies (X and XI) even bore “Alexander” as their regal surname. Alexander had become a source of inspiration for an entire civilization.

For a long while, Alexander's myth and worship also had a physical

focal point—his Alexandrian tomb, variously called the *Sēma* (marked grave) or *Sōma* (body).⁸⁰ As Ptolemy I probably predicted, it became one of the centers of Egyptian Alexandria, and a pilgrimage site for many a visitor. One such famous tourist was none other than Julius Caesar. The Roman general arrived in Egypt fresh from his victory over Pompey in Pharsalos, and hurried to visit Alexander's tomb. Lucan, our source for the episode, found it hard to decide which of the two he loathed more (10.14-52). Yet for Caesar this will have been a moving and meaningful moment. Some two decades earlier, when he was a mere quaestor in Spain, he was seized with sadness at the sight of Alexander's statue in Gades (symbolically located in the temple of Melqart)—how much the Macedonian had achieved by this age (Caesar was then about thirty-three), and how little he.⁸¹ When he finally arrived at Alexander's grave he was already the conqueror of Gaul and on his way to becoming the undisputed winner of an earth-shaking civil war. When Plutarch came to write his series of *Parallel Lives* it was Julius Caesar who was juxtaposed with Alexander.

Caesar did not live long enough to try his generalship and good fortune against the nations of the East, but he did follow in Alexander's footsteps along a different path—the one leading to Divinity. Soon after his death he was created a God by the Roman senate, with the strong encouragement of his adopted son Octavian and a willing reception from the Roman crowd.⁸² Octavian did not stop here, but added to his own name the title *divi filius*—Son of God.⁸³ Octavian realized the strong parallel with Alexander, and took the trouble to publicize it. When he himself reached Alexander's tomb in Alexandria he, too, asked to be shown the Macedonian's final resting place. He honored the late conqueror with flowers and a golden crown (and perhaps also accidentally broke off a bit of his nose). But when he was asked whether he wanted to behold the graves of the Ptolemaic kings, he answered in disdain, "I have come to see a King, not some corpses."⁸⁴ Clearly, the rotting Ptolemies were nothing in comparison with the old and new masters of the world. At a later time, when he had already become Augustus, he adopted Alexander as the symbol of his reign, fixing the Macedonian's image on his signet ring.⁸⁵

Finally, Augustus received the ultimate stamp of Alexander status—a full-blown myth of Divine Sonship. The Egyptian writer Asklepiades of Mendes (otherwise unknown) tells in his *Sayings of the Gods* a story which has by now become familiar. One night Attia (Augustus's mother) came to a midnight service in the temple of Apollo. While waiting in a queue, she fell asleep in her litter. While she was sleeping, a serpent crawled to her, and, so she thought, made love to her. When she awoke, the sign of the serpent appeared in her flesh.

For embarrassment, she refrained from frequenting the public baths. Ten months later (counting inclusively) she gave birth to Augustus, who was thus recounted a son of Apollo.⁸⁶ Whoever made up this story had studied well both Alexander's Divine Sonship and Seleukos's.

The close memetic relationship between Alexander and Augustus—comprising world rule, Divinity, Divine Sonship and snake birth—marks a symbolic culmination of Alexander's legacy. Military and political hegemony had indeed passed from Macedon to Rome, but the religious and mythical language in which they were expressed still belonged to Alexander. Thanks to the continuous use and reuse of Alexander's legacy, from the days following his death to the time of Augustus (and beyond), the question was no longer whether it was possible for a human to become a Divinity and a Son of God, but *for whom* it was possible.

Alexander and the End of Days

It is fair to say that no one who had ever met Alexander the man could remain indifferent; the Jews of *Eretz-Israel* were no exception. Alexander, whose character never failed to capture the imagination of storytellers, became a frequent guest in Jewish literature.¹ How deep was his impact on Jewish perception may be learned from the following fact: from among the wide variety of Greek names given to Jews in antiquity—Antigonos, Aristoboulos, Dositheos, Menelaos and Iason, to name a few—Alexander's alone remained popular after the demise of Greek as *lingua franca*. It has remained in use ever since.

Alexander's great adventure wrought ground-shaking changes from the Indus to the Nile, and beyond. The old order in the eastern part of the inhabited world, represented by Persian rule, broke down and gave way to a number of competing Hellenistic kingdoms. From the Jewish point of view, which sees world events as the manifestation of God's plan, this sudden break in political continuity called for a complete reevaluation of human history. It is thus not surprising that Alexander's name pops up repeatedly in the context of eschatological expectation.

THE ULTIMATE ENEMY

We have seen in [chapter 4](#) above how the legendary Alexander had become associated with protecting the northern frontier of civilization, building a fortification to defend a pass across the Caucasus. It is now time to examine the story more closely. Josephus gives the following description of an episode which took place in 73 c.E. (shortly before the start of the siege on Masada):²

The nation of the Alani—they are skythians, living about the Tanais and Lake

Maiotis, as we have previously shown—communicated with the king of the Hyrkanians, since they [sc. the Alani] had in mind an attack against Media and the lands beyond for the purpose of plunder. For that king was the master of the approach, *which King Alexander had closed with iron gates*. Now, after he admitted them through, they fell all together on the unsuspecting Medes, and plundered their heavily populated land, rich with all kinds of livestock. None dared oppose them. For Pakoros, king of the land, withdrew to the rough uplands, conceding everything to the marauders. Only with difficulty did he ransom from them his wife and concubines, who had fallen into their hands, paying them a hundred talents. Therefore, they continued to plunder with much ease and without battle, driving booty before them all the way to Armenia. The king in that land was Tiridates. He confronted them and offered battle, but came within a hair's breadth of being caught alive in the engagement. For someone threw a noose round him from afar and intended to drag him, and would have, if the king had not anticipated his enemy and fled by cutting the rope with his sword. The marauders, made even fiercer by the battle, wreaked havoc and destruction in the country, and eventually repaired once more to their homeland, driving a great multitude of people and other kinds of booty from both kingdoms.

The Medes, so says Josephus, were taken utterly by surprise; they did not expect this attack. But they should have. At the end of his reign—only a few years before their incursion—the Emperor Nero planned an expedition against the Alani. In all likelihood, his goal was exactly to anticipate this kind of raid from beyond the Caucasus. He summoned troops from Germania, Britannia and Illyricum, and conscripted a new legion of young, tall Italians—lads of six feet or more—for the purpose of this war. He called this legion *Magni Alexandri Phalanx*.³

Of course, Alexander had never been to the mountains which we today call the Caucasus, and obviously did not build any gates there. The association of his name with the real Caucasus may, however, be quite old. As we have seen, a cloud of geographical uncertainty accompanied Alexander's march through Asia. During the campaign itself, the name “Caucasus” was given to the Hindu Kush, where Alexander and his men certainly did visit, and even discovered Prometheus's cave. This alone was enough to muddle things up. The uncertainty concerning the two rivers called Tanais (both the Don and the Iaxartes) added to the confusion.

Furthermore, the real Caucasus was close to the traditional home of the Amazons. We have seen that Alexander's encounter with the Amazon Queen took place (so asserted contemporaneous sources) in Hyrkania, in the vicinity of the original Caspian Gates. In fact, Kleitarchos (according to Strabo), wrote that Thalestria, the Amazon Queen, set out from the Caspian Gates *and* Thermodon.⁴ Kleitarchos seems to have thought that the Caspian gates were indeed in the real Caucasus; Strabo eagerly corrected him. Thus, the name of Alexander had already become connected with the mountain range between the

Caspian and the Black seas in the first generation after his death. A gate, or fortification, obviously existed there to block the main passage over and across the ridge—the Dariel pass—at least in Josephus's time.⁵ It was thus easy for storytellers and poets to ascribe that gate to Alexander.

The connection of Alexander's name with the Caucasus had ample opportunity to reassert itself in later times. One such opportunity came in the first half of the first century B.c., during the reign of Mithridates VI Eupator, king of Pontus, and his epic struggle with Rome. A wealth of contemporary and later evidence indicates that Mithridates identified himself closely with Alexander. To begin, he openly claimed the Macedonian as an ancestor on the distaff side. Like Alexander, he looked back to Perseus as a convenient figure combining both Hellenic and Persian traditions, and even portrayed himself as both Dionysos and Herakles. While campaigning in Phrygia Mithridates at one point stayed in an inn visited three centuries earlier by Alexander. This was interpreted as a propitious omen in view of the coming war with Rome. When the town of Apameia was devastated by an earthquake, not an uncommon occurrence, Mithridates awarded it a hundred talents to aid in its restoration. In this too, so it was claimed, he followed the precedent set by Alexander. In similar fashion he widened the boundaries of Artemis's sacred enclosure in Ephesos, following and outstripping Alexander's past benefactions there.⁶

More pertinent still is the fact that, unlike Alexander's, the history of Mithridates does include the lands about the (real) Caucasus. Early in his reign Mithridates conducted a number of campaigns to succor the Bosporan Greeks from various skythian raiders. These resulted in the inclusion of the Bosphorus region in his kingdom.⁷ The conquest of the Caucasus area did serve Mithridates as grounds for a self-glorifying comparison with past Greats. He and his people could easily be compared with the might and glory of both Romans and Macedonians. After all, neither had ever been able to vanquish the Caucasus region; Darius, Philippos, even Alexander's general Zopyrion failed miserably where Mithridates succeeded.⁸ While there is no indication that Mithridates or any of his generals ever built a fortification in the Caucasus range, one can easily imagine how the *Zeitgeist* could help the legend of Alexander's gate in the Caucasus develop and reassert itself.⁹

The story of Mithridates is remarkable. A self-professed champion of Hellenism against Roman imperialism, he managed to hold his ground for a long generation. Worn out by the initial onslaught of Sulla, then by the methodical attrition of Lucullus, Mithridates finally succumbed to yet another Alexander emulator, Pompeius *Magnus*. Already in his

youth, due to a real or imagined similarity between the two, Pompey's friends had become accustomed to call him "Alexander," an appellation which he did not decline. Furthermore, his exploits in the civil war on behalf of Sulla's cause had earned him the title *Magnus*—"The Great." Like Alexander, he was also the conqueror of the East. Although his military campaign had not taken him nearly as far east as his Macedonian counterpart, he could nonetheless be extolled by a fellow Roman as an equal not only of Alexander, but also of Hercules and Pater Liber.¹⁰ In the magnificent triumph celebrating his Eastern victories, this Roman Alexander rode bedecked in a cloak which, if anyone could believe it, had once belonged to the original.¹¹

The story of Alexander at the Caucasus thus had an excellent opportunity to dig in deeper during Pompey's campaign in the region. Crossing the Caucasus on Mithridates' trail, the Romans became embroiled with some local nations. In a ferocious battle for control of the passes the Roman army overcame the barbarous Albani, assisted though they were by Amazon warriors. Although no female bodies were actually retrieved, their presence was nonetheless deduced from the appearance of some small shields and typical Amazonian footwear.¹² As we have seen, mentions of Amazons intersect frequently with the story of the Caspian Gates.

The memory of Alexander in the Roman East was awakened yet again by another young luminary—Germanicus.¹³ Having arrived on the scene, the Emperor's son immediately won immense popularity. Showing deep deference to the ancient civic tradition of Athens, heaping benefactions on troubled provincials, and making himself readily accessible to his subjects, he brought to mind the now-idealized figure of the young Macedonian. Like Alexander, he was a great leader in war. His own victorious *Drang nach Osten* in Europe was cut short only by the cautious command of Tiberius. In relation to the Parthians and the Armenian question, he turned out to be an able diplomat, in the best tradition of Augustus. During his visit to Egypt, Germanicus followed Alexander up the Nile.¹⁴ We are also told that he wanted to visit the mysteries of Samothrace, where Alexander's parents had met. Even in his downfall Germanicus resembled Alexander: in both cases there were strong suspicions of conspiracy and poison. Both were thirty-three at their death. It is small wonder, then, that Germanicus was widely compared to Alexander at his death.

We thus see that by the time of Nero and Josephus the myth of Alexander as defender of civilization against the barbarians from the North had much to rely on. The eastern campaign of Corbulo, Nero's able general, not to mention the intended sequel by the Emperor himself, will have aroused both excitement and apprehension. The

memory of Alexander could address both. One can easily imagine a poetical exhortation, perhaps even by Nero himself, composed for the occasion. Its main theme would be the Emperor as a second Alexander, recruiting an Alexander's phalanx, to march through Alexander's gates.¹⁵

Back to Josephus. In his account, the historian relates how a skythian nation, overcoming Alexander's fortification through the perfidy of its custodian, broke into the lands of the south, wreaked havoc and destruction, and left death and misery in its wake. The inefficiency of the two monarchs, Pakoros of Media and Tiridates of Armenia, serves to emphasize the greatness of Alexander, the Heroic bulwark of civilization against threats from the wild Beyond.

Of course, this raid of the Alani was not the first such incursion of a skythian nation into the lands south of the Caucasus, nor was it the worst. Some time after the year 650 B.c. the skythians, under the leadership of their king Madyes, conducted a major raid southward. Riding east along the Caucasus, they probably crossed south at the Derbend pass between the mountains and the Caspian sea. Meeting the Medes in battle, they broke Median might and became masters of "all Asia.". They proceeded to march on Egypt, but were eventually persuaded, or rather bribed, by the Egyptian Psammetichos to turn back and spare his land.¹⁶

Now, it has long ago been suggested that the skythians residing north of the Caucasus be identified with the biblical Magog, son of Japheth and grandson of Noah. The earliest record of this identification belongs, in fact, to none other than Josephus. In his survey of the peoples derived from the sons of Noah after the Deluge, he remarks, "And Magoges settled those called after him the 'Magogas,' but who are called by the Greeks skythians." The picture one gets from the juxtaposition of the two passages in Josephus is striking. Alexander's fortification of the Caspian Gates becomes a major physical barrier on the southward track of Gog, king of Magog!

¹⁷

This statement may sound odd to a student of Alexander *historicus*; not so to the student of Alexander *mythicus*. One branch of the *Romance* preserves a story of how Alexander separated a group of peoples from the rest of humanity, shutting them out behind the Caspian Gates, which he had constructed between the mountains called Breasts of the North.¹⁸ This feat was nothing short of a miracle. Alexander addressed God—Lord of all Creation, who by His Word created all things, Heaven and Earth, who is alone eternal, supreme and invisible, a lone God, except for whom there is no other—and asked Him to bring the two mountains together. God consented, and the gap closed to a narrow strait. This Alexander blocked with

elaborately wrought bronze gates, and oiled with a special, non-flammable solution. In his prayer Alexander stated explicitly that he had always followed God's orders, and now held the world in his hand by God's will.¹⁹

The names of the shut-out nations deserve special attention. Some make very little sense. Others are manifestly mythical, such as the Man-Eaters and the so-called Dogheads. Yet all lists contain two names which are fully historical: Sarmatians and Alani. The Alani are already familiar to us from the vicious raid of 73 C.E., described by Josephus. The Sarmatians, yet another Scythian nation, offered their services as mercenaries during the struggle for control over Armenia waged by the Parthian king Artabanus and his Roman-backed rivals, in the reign of Tiberius.²⁰

A tantalizing feature of these lists of shut-out nations is that they are all headed by the twins of dread, straight out of Ezekiel's prophecy—Gog and Magog.²¹ Taking pride of place at the head of the list, they form a consistent threat to the civilized south as potential leaders of an entire host of nations, both historical (Sarmatians, Alani) and mythical.²² Thus, Alexander becomes the defender of humanity in general and of Monotheism in particular, against the terrible enemy destined to come at the End of Days.

To appreciate fully the magnitude of Alexander's eschatological role, we ought to take a close look at this portion of Ezekiel's prophecy. The chapters dealing with Gog of the land of Magog (38–39) follow on the heels of another famous prophecy, one of the most stirring and influential pieces of biblical literature—the vision of the dry bones (37). In it the prophet is led to a valley full of bones, the symbolic remains of Israel. By order of the divinely-inspired prophet, the bones are covered with sinew, flesh and skin, and God's spirit is breathed into them. This act of resuscitation is symbolic of Israel's return from exile. Further, the sons of Judah and the sons of Joseph are to be reunited, to live in justice and purity on the mountains of Israel. One king shall rule upon them and one shepherd shall lead them—God's slave, David. The temple is to be rebuilt, and the people shall live happily ever after.

Yet one more dreadful chapter must be written, before this glorious and idyllic picture can be completed. The prophet is ordered by God to do the following (38:1–9):

son of man, turn your face to Gog in the land of Magog, the head chief of Meshech and Tuval, and prophesy about him. And you shall say, "thus spake my lord Yhwh: Now I come unto you, Gog, head chief of Meshech and Tuval. I shall turn you back and put hooks in your cheeks and lead you out with all your army, horses and horsemen fully armed, a great throng, buckler and shield, carrying swords all of them. Paras [i.e. Persia], Kush and Put with them, all with shield and helmet. Gomer with all her hordes, the house of Togarma in

the North of North and all his hordes, many nations with you. Be ready and make ready, you and all your throng assembling to you, and you shall be their guard. After many days you shall receive your orders, at the end of years you shall come to a land restored from the sword, gathered from many nations on the mountains of Israel, which have always been waste, and it was taken out of nations and they shall sit in safety all of them. And you shall come upon them as a calamity, arrive like a cloud to cover the land, you and all your hordes and all the nations with you.

Gog and the hordes of the North will descend on Israel, thinking to attack an undefended land and gather much booty. But when they come, God's fiery wrath will pour down upon them and destroy them to a man. Their entire army shall become the food of bird and beast, and their remains shall be buried in a special precinct, as a measure of purification of the land. Then will all the nations see Yhwh's judgment, and Israel will remain faithful in his land (38:10–39:29).

We thus see that an apocalyptic battle between Gog and Israel, or rather between Gog and God, is to precede the final and peaceful settlement of Israel. A more elaborate picture appears in John's *Revelation* (20:7 *ad fin.*): at the end of the thousand years Satan shall be released from his guards, assemble Gog and Magog and march to the last battle. These three, together with the Beast and the False Prophet shall be destroyed and the Judgment at the Great White Throne shall follow. Afterwards: New Heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem and the Coming of Christ.

However, from the time of Ezekiel onwards, trouble at the Caucasus remained local, and had little or no effect on life in *Eretz-Israel*. In fact, the only unexpected enemy descending upon the land from the north was Alexander himself.²³ His appearance on stage may have called to mind the prophecies of Ezekiel, especially in connection with the siege and destruction of Tyre. Yet if Alexander's arrival stirred up various expectations for a final day of judgment, a not unlikely premise, such expectations were soon to be frustrated by his death. Ironically, the best candidate for the role of Gog turned out to be his greatest adversary. The days—that much was obvious—did not end.

Yet a day of judgment did come. In Josephus's own lifetime Judea was devastated by war against Rome. The Jerusalem temple, only recently renovated and adorned by king Herod, was burned to the ground. Disaster had struck. suddenly, the prophecies of Ezekiel became all too relevant once again. In this context the raid of the Alani in the fields and dells of Media and Armenia assumes new meaning. Could this incursion be seen as a portent for days to come, a tremor, warning of the enormous earthquake foreseen by the prophet, when God would finally pour his wrath on the heads of Israel's enemies?

Alexander's involvement in Jewish eschatology is not limited to his special position vis-à-vis Gog and Magog. In fact, he plays a key role in the most influential piece of apocalyptic eschatological literature produced by second temple Judaism: the book of *Daniel*.²⁴ According to the framework story of his book, Daniel stands in the Royal court of three successive kingdoms—Babylon, Media and Persia—looking into the future. In this future he sees the progress of human history in a series of distinct visions, presented as a succession of kingdoms.²⁵ Three of these visions concern us here.

The first (*Daniel* 2) is set in the court of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. The King has had a disturbing dream, which caused him much agitation. To alleviate his fear, he calls upon all of his sages, prophets and magicians, and asks them to interpret his dream. But there is a problem: unlike Pharaoh in *Genesis*, Nebuchadnezzar does not tell them the details of his dream; he expects them to guess for themselves. Obviously, they fail. This failure prepares the ground for Daniel, to whom the particulars of the dream had been revealed by God. In his dream, so divines Daniel, the King saw a huge statue, with a gilded head, silver chest and arms, bronze stomach and thighs, and iron shanks and feet. Then, suddenly, came a strange rock, smashing the statue's feet. The statue crumbled to dust, and the rock filled the entire world from one end to the other. Daniel interprets the dream easily: the golden head stands for King Nebuchadnezzar himself, and he is to be followed by three other kingdoms of decreasing worth—that much is obvious from the metals used to define them—until the rock finally puts an end to the story (or rather to history) for ever and ever.

Given the origin of the book of *Daniel* and the kingships it recognizes, the historical picture presented therein is rather clear: gold stands for Babylonia, silver for Media, bronze for Persia and Iron for Macedonian rule.²⁶ This last is to be followed by God's kingdom, which, at an unspecified time in the future, is to encompass the entire world, and last for all eternity.

A second vision comes in [chapter 7](#). Like that of the multi-metallic statue, it numbers four different kingdoms, but this time they are symbolized not by the body parts of the statue, but rather by four strange, supernatural beasts rising from the sea. The identity of the four kingdoms in this vision is the same, but here we have greater emphasis on the Hellenistic fourth, stranger and more terrible than its predecessors. This vision also contains allusions to the actual history of the Hellenistic period down to the time of Antiochos IV Epiphanes. The atmosphere in this vision is one of great crisis. Terrible things are afoot, and a Day of Judgment is near. Although no particular date is

given, a final change in history is promised, which will put world rule in the hands of "the people of the sacred ones above."

In the third vision ([chapter 8](#)) the veil of mystery is finally lifted, at least in part. In this vision Daniel sees a wondrous ram, thrusting with its horns in all directions and subjugating all animals before it. Then, suddenly, a satyr appears from the West, and charges the ram. A battle breaks in all fury, and the ram is thrown to the ground and crushed. The satyr's single horn then breaks, and is replaced by four different horns. The meaning of the dream is revealed to Daniel by a humanlike figure which appears out of nowhere: *the horned ram which you have seen is the kings of Media and Persia; and the hairy satyr is the king of Yavan (Greece), and the great horn between its eyes is the first king* (20–21). The first king is thus Alexander; the breaking of the horn signifies the division of the empire after his death.²⁷

Without going into the many riveting questions posed by *Daniel*, one can readily agree about one aspect of the book's historical outlook. The Hellenistic age, inaugurated by Alexander and continued by the successor kings, is perceived as the last stage in history before the Day of Reckoning and the dawn of God's Kingdom. This notion fits well with the historical circumstances in which *Daniel* was composed. The fourth and fifth syrian wars, which ended with the transfer of power in *Eretz-Israel* from Ptolemaic Egypt to seleucid syria, must have been a nasty shock after the relative stability of the third century C.E. Following the religious confrontations in the reign of Antiochos IV, the situation reached fever pitch. A sense of change was in the air, and at this point in Jewish history (as in many others) the result was an outbreak of apocalyptic, eschatological and messianic activity. As we shall see presently, the perception of Alexander as the instigator of the last stage in history before the messianic age, based on his role in *Daniel*, was to become a staple in Jewish eschatology of later generations.

THE END OF PROPHECY

One such field in Jewish eschatological thought where Alexander occupies a prominent position deals with the relation between the inevitable march of history and the principle of prophecy. Prophecy has played a distinctive and crucial role in Israelite history, from its earliest beginnings down to the present time. It is thus hardly surprising that it, too, was subjected to the evolutionary process of natural selection, which caused it to change and adapt in both nature and practice. What concerns us here is the major shift in the history of Israelite prophecy during the second temple period, whereby at the end of a long and gradual process prophecy had ceased to be regarded

as a legitimate means of communication with the Almighty.²⁸

The final stage of this process was formulated by rabbi Yosi Ben-Halafta in his treatise *Seder 'Olam*. This treatise, composed in the second half of the second century c.E. and edited about the middle of the third, attempts to create a unified chronology on the basis of information gleaned from the books of the Bible. This work is cited widely in later rabbinic literature, and otherwise commands great authority. In fact, its established chronology underpins the Jewish dating system in current use.²⁹ Interestingly, the “end of prophecy” is dated by R. Yosi concurrently with the arrival of Alexander. The relevant passage is worth quoting in full:³⁰

And the *shaggy satyr king of Greece* etc. is the first king; and *there stood a Hero-King* etc., and *as he stood* [his kingdom] *broke down* etc.—he is Alexander the Macedonian, who ruled for 12 years. Until that time the prophets had prophesied with the holy spirit. From now on, *turn thine ear and listen to the words of the sages*, as it is said: *for it is pleasant to keep them in your heart...to put your trust in Yhwh*.

Needless to say, the synchronization offered by *Seder 'Olam* was made in retrospect and should be interpreted accordingly. The practice of prophecy did not stop in the 330's B.c., and the statement of R. Yosi would have made little sense to contemporaries of Alexander.³¹ Nevertheless, Jewish sources dating from the Hellenistic phase of the second temple period testify to the belief that the legitimacy of prophecy had somehow lapsed, and was to be renewed at a future, unspecified date.

One such source, namely *I Maccabees*, relates the political settlement effected by shim'on Ben-Matityahu, the last survivor of the Maqabi brothers, in the late 140's B.c. Having been appointed High-Priest in Jerusalem by the seleukid King Demetrios II, shim'on turned to legitimize his nomination in Jewish eyes. According to the anonymous author of *I Macc.*, “the Jews and the priests decided that shim'on be their leader and High-Priest forever, until a faithful prophet arises.”³² The assumption underlying this statement is clear enough: shim'on and his contemporaries lived in a time when true prophecy was utterly absent. To judge by the phrasing of this official document, the reemergence of true prophecy was an event expected to take place at an undetermined point in the future. When it resumed, it would also bring about a complete renegotiation of existing order.

The same attitude towards the future reappearance of true prophecy is manifest in an earlier stage in *I Macc.* (4:43–46). During the tenure of Menelaos as High-Priest in Jerusalem, extreme Jewish Hellenizers and their Gentile allies had deliberately desecrated the temple. In order to cleanse the temple and restore its ritual purity, Yehudah Maqabi and his followers had to contend with the results of this

deliberate profanation. During the cleanup process, a question had arisen regarding the fate of the desecrated altar stones. How were they to deal with these most sacred of objects, which had been rendered ritually unclean? The politic answer to this complex situation was, once again, to postpone the decision to an unknown date in the future, when a prophet should come and provide a reliable answer.

What seems like the same event is recounted, from a rabbinic point of view, by *Megillat Ta'anit*, an early rabbinic work setting out a list of festive days, on which mourning, fasting or both are disallowed:³³

*On Mar^heshvan 23rd the railing was removed from the court. Because the Gentiles had built a place there, where they instituted the prostitutes. And when the house of the Hasmoneans gained the upper hand they took it from them and removed it. And they found precious stones there, which lie there to this very day, until Elijah should come and testify whether they are clean or unclean. The day they removed it they declared a festive day.*³⁴

Obviously, many of the details in this short text differ from the account of *I Macc...* such particulars as the import of the railing, the location of the court, the nature and significance of the precious stones and the activity of the prostitutes, excite the imagination and demand an explanation.³⁵ What concerns us here, however, is the identity of the prophet destined to arrive and provide the answer—none other than Elijah.³⁶ The appearance of Elijah is not merely a matter of exegetical curiosity. His mention immediately calls to mind the final verses of the prophet Malachi, closing the era of Biblical prophecy: *Here I send to you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the day of Yhwh, great and terrible.*³⁷ Furthermore, Elijah is also commonly seen as the precursor of the Messiah himself!³⁸

Alexander's manifestation in *Seder 'Olam* thus assumes profound meaning. His arrival signifies the end of an era, a terminal point of true prophecy. The new age which he helped bring about is destined to come to an end only with the return of Elijah and the coming of the Messiah. We thus find that the theological role assigned to Alexander in this historical scheme, based on recognition of his role in *Daniel*, is similar to the one deduced from the legendary accounts of Alexander as the penultimate enemy of Gog and Magog. In both cases, he stands at the threshold of a new era, the one before last in human history.

TEN KINGS

The position of Alexander as a prominent milestone on the road towards the end of time (*eschaton*). receives its clearest elucidation in a Hebrew text as fascinating as it is little known: the *Midrash* of Ten Kings.³⁹ This text, of unknown authorship and uncertain provenance, sets forth a list of ten Kings, who have ruled or will rule the entire

world, “from one end to the other.”⁴⁰ It runs as follows:⁴¹

Ten Kings have ruled the world from one end to the other. The first King is the sacred One Blessed be He, who rules heaven and earth, and had an idea to set up Kings on earth. As it is said: *and he changes eras and times, bringing Kings down and setting them up* etc.⁴²

The second King is Nimrod, who ruled from one end of the world to the other. For all of humankind was afraid of the deluge, and Nimrod was their King. As it is said: *and the beginning of his kingdom was Babylon*.⁴³

The third King is Joseph, who ruled from one end of the world to the other. As it is said: *and all the land came to Egypt*.⁴⁴ It is not written “the land” but rather “all the land.” And they were bringing Joseph their taxes and offerings in order to buy corn. For he was deputy to the Egyptian King for 40 years, and King himself for 40 years. As it is said: *and there arose a new King over Egypt* etc.⁴⁵

The fourth King is Solomon, who ruled from one end of the world to the other. As it is said: *and Solomon ruled all the kingdoms* etc., *and they brought him each their yearly offerings: vessels of silver and of gold, robes, weapons and spices, horses and mules*.⁴⁶

The fifth King is Ahab, King of Israel, as it is said: *by Yhwh your God, if there is a nation or a kingdom* etc.⁴⁷ And the governors of all the provinces were subject to him, sending their gifts and taxes and bringing them to Ahab. For there are 232 provinces in the world, as it is said: *and he counted the servants of the provincial governors* etc.⁴⁸

The sixth King is Nebuchadnezzar, as it is said: *and every place where men live*.⁴⁹ Not only that, but he also ruled avian life, so that not even a bird could open its mouth without his permission, as it is said: *and there was none that moved a wing, or opened its mouth to chirp*.⁵⁰

The seventh King is Cyrus, as it is said: *Thus spake Cyrus King of Persia: all the kingdoms* etc.⁵¹

The eighth King is Alexander the Macedonian, who ruled from one end of the world to the other, as it is said: *and as I was regarding, suddenly a satyr-goat came from the west*.⁵² It is not written “on the face of the earth”, but rather “on the face of the entire earth”—to find out what lies at the ends of the earth. Not only that, but he also wanted to ascend to heaven and discover what lies in heaven, and to descend to the deep and discover what lies in the deep. And his kingdom was scattered to the four winds, as it is said: *and as he stood his kingdom disintegrated, and was scattered to the four winds*.⁵³

The ninth King is the King Messiah, who is destined to rule from one end of the world to the other, as it is said: *and the rock which destroyed the idol became a tall mountain, and filled the entire earth*.⁵⁴

The tenth King—the kingship returns to its owner. He who was the first King is also the last, as it is said: *I am the first, I am the last, and except me there is no God*. And it is written: *and Yhwh will become King over the entire earth* and the kingship shall return to its heirs; and then: *the idols will be gone altogether, and Yhwh alone shall stand up high that day*. And He will shepherd his flock and settle them, as it is written: *I shall settle my flock and settle them*; and we shall see Him eye to eye, as it is written: *for they shall see the return of Yhwh to Zion eye to eye*.⁵⁵

Alternative versions of the *Midrash* give somewhat different King-lists (see Table 1).⁵⁶

The earliest and most popular of the texts which retain the five

versions of the *Midrash* are no doubt *Pirqei deRabi Eli'ezer* and *Targum Sheni*. The dating of *Targum Sheni* (literally “second Translation”), an Aramaic tract of verse-by-verse exegesis on the *Scroll of Esther*, remains an open question. The current consensus sees it as an *Eretz-Israeli* composition of the late Byzantine or early Islamic Period.⁵⁷ *Pirqei deRabi Eli'ezer*, a *midrashic* corpus relating to events in the book of *Genesis*, is also assumed to be *Eretz-Israeli* in origin, and of about the same or slightly later period.⁵⁸ However, it is clear that both texts make use of much older material. Thus, since the age of the *Midrash* of Ten Kings cannot simply be obtained from the dating of the works in which it appears, it ought to be considered on the basis of internal evidence.

Two questions arise immediately: When was the list first composed? and What is its oldest surviving version? The answer to both questions lies in the gap between the eighth and ninth Kings—the point of transition from historical to mythical time. In *Pirqei deRabi Eli'ezer* the eighth King is Alexander, the ninth already the King Messiah. The other four renditions add later historical developments between Alexander's reign and the Messiah's. *Targum Sheni*, eliminating Ahab from the list, adds “Rome”. in eighth place. “*Bereshit Rabati*,” only slightly more specific, inserts in ninth place “Caesar Augustus of Rome.”⁵⁹ Things become more concrete in the ‘*Aqtan deMar Ya'aqov*, which supplies us with two easily identifiable historical figures: Vespasian and Ardashir I. The former is the Roman general-turned-emperor who put down the Great Revolt in Judea, the traumatic event which resulted in the destruction of Herod's great temple in 70 C.E. The latter is the founder of the Sassanid empire (*reg.* 224–241 C.E.).⁶⁰ This version of the list can thus be shown to date between the early third century and the rise of Islam. The last version, in Ms. De-Rossi 327, refers (in encrypted, apocalyptic style) to the Umayyid Caliph Hisham Ibn-'Abd-el-Malik, in the early eighth century C.E., and appears to be the latest of the alternative lists.⁶¹ Consequently, the earliest list seems to be the one given in *Pirqei deRabi Eli'ezer*. Its *terminus post quem* is easily set in Alexander's own lifetime (the *Midrash*, in its present forms, cannot possibly have come into being before Alexander). A reasonable *terminus ante quem*, deduced from the lack of reference to Rome in the earliest version (and from the lack of supporting biblical verses in the versions which do mention Roman rule), would be Pompey's conquest of *Eretz-Israel* in 63 B.C., or at the very latest, the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 C.E.

TABLE 1 Midrash King-lists by source

Pirqei deRabi Eli'ezer	Targum Sheni	"Bereshit Rabati"	'Aqṭan deMar Ya'āqov	Ms. De-Rossi 3 27
God	God ^a	God		God
Nimrod	Nimrod	Nimrod	Nimrod	Nimrod
Joseph	Pharaoh	Joseph	Joseph	Joseph
Solomon	Israel	Solomon	Solomon	Solomon
Ahab			Ahab	Ahab
Nebuchadnezzar	Nebuchadnezzar	Nebuchadnezzar	Nebuchadnezzar	Nebuchadnezzar
		Darius	Ahashverosh ^b	
Cyrus	Ahashverosh	Cyrus	Cyrus	Cyrus
Alexander	Greece	Alexander	Alexander	Alexander
	Rome	Caesar Augustus of Rome	Vespasian	
			Ardashir	Assorted <i>Midrashim</i> ^c
King Messiah	Ben-David the Messiah	King Messiah		Messiah
God	God			Ben-David God ^d

^a While the other versions of the *Midrash* call God "The sacred One Blessed be He," *Targum Sheni* has "The King of Kings, Yhwh of the hosts."

^b That is, the Persian King mentioned in *Esther*, in all likelihood Xerxes: *Ezra* 4:4–7, but cf. Josephus, *AJ* 11.184.

^c Covering in haphazard fashion the period between the destruction of the second temple in 70 C.E. and the Umayyad Caliph Hisham Ibn-'Abd-el-Malik (reg. 724-743 C.E.).

^d In this version God is not assigned a tenth kingdom but will preside over the day of judgment following a Messianic age lasting two millennia.

The same deduction can be made from the frequency of the various names in the different lists. The King with the greatest number of appearances is clearly the First and Last: eight times under different names. Nimrod and Nebuchadnezzar appear five times each. Solomon, Cyrus, Alexander and the Messiah (he, too, with varying titles), four times. Ahab, three. Ahashverosh, two. Pharaoh, Israel, Darius, Rome, Caesar-Augustus, Vespasian and Ardashir: a single appearance each. If we assume that the most frequent names belong to the earliest list, the less frequent ones to the later and more idiosyncratic variants, the composition of the list in *Pirqei deRabi Eli'ezer* appears to support its originality.⁶²

A comparative examination of the arrangement of the various lists leads to a similar conclusion. The array of Kings in *Pirqei deRabi Eli'ezer* is tight and well organized. Eight human Kings—seven in the past and one still a promise for the future—are sandwiched between the first and the last reigns of God. The competing lists, on the other hand, all seem to be based on the prototype provided by *Pirqei deRabi Eli'ezer*, while each version manipulates the original set-up in its own peculiar fashion, in order to accommodate the new facts unfurled by

the march of history. As we observed above, *Targum Sheni* omits Ahab to make room for a ninth kingdom—Rome. “*Bereshit Rabati*” eliminates both Ahab and God’s ultimate reign, to make room for Darius (the Mede?) in sixth place, and for Caesar Augustus in ninth. In *Aqṭan deMar Ya’aqov* sixth place is occupied by Ahashverosh, while God relinquishes both reigns to allow the admittance of Vespasian and Ardashir. De-Rossi 327 employs a different tactic, sticking hard by the original list and opening a gap for new developments (taking up about half of the original text. on the threshold between the *spatium historicum* and the *spatium mythicum*—that is, between Alexander and the Messiah.

Having established both the primacy of the list in *Pirquei deRabī Eli’ezer* and a relatively safe chronological framework for its foundation, we can now turn to examine its historical import. Unfortunately, the wide time gap between Alexander and Pompey (not to mention Vespasian) prohibits any positive assertion concerning the exact historical context of the *Midrash*, as well as its concrete political and theological aims. The Hellenistic and Roman phases of second temple history form one of the most turbulent chapters in the history of *Eretz-Israel*, a chapter laced with ardent Messianic aspirations and disappointments.⁶³ Even regarding the all-important question, whether the author of the *Midrash* of Ten Kings was merely engaged in theoretical speculation, or perhaps had a specific candidate in mind, we remain quite ignorant. In view of these insoluble questions, I shall limit my discussion to Alexander’s role *vis-à-vis* his fellow world-rulers, especially with his immediate predecessor on the list, Cyrus the Great.

How is one to understand the succession from Cyrus to Alexander? There is no doubt that the historical Alexander saw himself as a successor to Cyrus, an attitude evident in the following anecdotes. Coming to the land of the Ariaspes (or Arimaspoi), whom Cyrus had named *Euergetai* for saving him and his army from utter destruction, Alexander immediately granted them freedom, and added to their territory from that of their neighbors. He did so in order to reward them for their loyalty towards his predecessor.⁶⁴ Taking the city of Cyropolis, Cyrus’s Sogdian foundation, which had taken part in the revolt of Bactria and Sogdia against him, Alexander decided to spare the city for the sake of its founder, “since he admired none other of these nations more than that King and semiramis, who, he believed, excelled by far in magnanimity and fame.” He did so despite the fact that he received an injury to the head and neck from a flying stone!⁶⁵ It was also claimed by most of the contemporary authorities that Alexander attempted the crossing of the Gedrosian desert in emulation of Cyrus, who had done so in his time, but lost all his army and escaped with a mere seven men.⁶⁶ On his return from India to Persia,

he was much distressed to see that Cyrus's grave had been plundered. Alexander, who routinely visited Cyrus's tomb, ordered Aristoboulos to restore the monument to its previous condition, and tortured its guards in order to find out who had desecrated it.⁶⁷

All these episodes underline the obvious: Alexander was Cyrus's successor because he took over Cyrus's empire and sat on Cyrus's throne. By sparing his foundation, respecting his grave and rewarding his erstwhile loyal supporters—as well as by donning Persian royal garb, adopting Persian court ceremonials, and keeping Persian nobility in positions of power—Alexander made it clear that his aim was not to destroy Cyrus's empire but rather to continue it under his own rule. He even married an Iranian noblewoman and later the daughter of the last Persian King; his legitimate heirs would be half-Asiatic.

The notion of continuity between Cyrus and Alexander remained alive for many centuries. For example, in the first half of the first century C.E. the Parthian King Artabanus threatened to march against Rome and bring under Parthian sway the full extent of the empires of Cyrus and Alexander.⁶⁸ A clearer manifestation of the same principle appears in Plutarch's *De Fortuna*, where Darius, strongly impressed by Alexander's chivalric behavior toward the women of his house, muses that perhaps the Persians are not so unfortunate to fall under the suzerainty of such a gallant conqueror. Furthermore, Plutarch's Darius prays that “none other than Alexander should sit on Cyrus's throne.”⁶⁹ Through this prayer Darius adopts Alexander, thus making him the legitimate heir of Cyrus's kingdom. Finally, when Eusebius sought for examples against which to set the virtue of the Emperor Constantine, yet another Great, he chose none other than Cyrus and Alexander as the paragons of past greatness.⁷⁰

In Jewish historical thought, which regards earthly events as the unfolding of a Divine drama, the transition from Cyrus's empire to Alexander's required special justification. Cyrus, the founder of Persian rule, was no mere foreign conqueror, like so many others in earlier and later times. so great was his importance that he received a unique distinction: he was both God's appointed shepherd, and his Messiah. In the words of the prophet “second” Isaiah:⁷¹

I [am Yhwh], who realizes the word of his slave and completes the advice of his angels, who says to Jerusalem: you shall be inhabited, to the cities of Judea: you shall be built; I shall rebuild your ruins [...] I, who call Cyrus my shepherd,⁷² who will accomplish all that I wish, namely: Jerusalem shall be built and the temple founded. Thus spake Yhwh to his Messiah, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have taken in mine, to subject nations to him and break the loins of kings, to open doors before him and keep gates open. I shall go before you and make the crooked straight, I shall break brazen doors and cut through iron bars. I shall give you the treasures of darkness and hidden hoards, for to know that I am Yhwh, who calls you by name, the God of Israel; for the sake of my

slave Jacob and Israel my chosen one, and *I shall call you by your name, and you shall not know me.*

According to the prophet, Cyrus would enjoy God's help in defeating kings, taking fortified cities and winning great treasures. This would be his reward for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and of the temple. We should note well: this is the first and only time that a foreign king is called a Messiah—משיח in Hebrew, *χριστός* (Christ) in the septuagint. How was one to explain the removal of Persian sovereignty, instituted by God's own anointed shepherd, and its replacement by Macedonian rule?

This question lies at the heart of the most famous account of Alexander's encounter with the Jews—Josephus's telling of his visit to Jerusalem.⁷³ The story is well known. Having decided to besiege Tyre, Alexander sent letters to the archpriest of the Jews, demanding military aid, provisions, and the payment of whatever taxes were formerly paid to Darius. The Jews would not repent preferring the friendship of the Macedonians to that of the Persians, an offer they could not refuse. Much to Alexander's surprise, the archpriest replied that he had taken an oath, promising Darius never to raise arms against him as long as he should live. Alexander was filled with wrath and promised revenge. Having taken Tyre and Gaza, he proceeded to march on Jerusalem.

The High-Priest, Yaddu'a, filled with agony and fright, turned to sacrifice, prayer and supplication, in the hope that God would shield the people and ward off the imminent danger. As he was taking his sleep after the sacrifice, God appeared to him in a dream, and ordered him take courage and throw Alexander a full-scale reception fit for a King; God was watching over his people and his city—no evil would befall them. God's orders were followed to the letter, and when Alexander arrived he encountered a throng of Jerusalemites dressed in white, the priests in their fine linens, and at their head the High-Priest, in hyacinth and gold, his headdress inscribed with the Name of God. Alexander approached the festive crowd and, to everyone's surprise, did obeisance—*proskynesis*—to the Name, and anticipated the High-Priest in offering a greeting. The Jews answered with joyful congratulation.

The syrian kings, together with the Phoenicians and Chaldeans, who had come in hope of plunder, were bewildered and befuddled. They thought Alexander had gone mad. Parmenion alone dared approach the King: “Why, when all men do obeisance to you, do you prostrate yourself before the archpriest of the Jews?” he asked. “Nay,” replied Alexander, “not to him, but to the God, whose High-Priest this is. For a man of the very same apparel appeared to me in a dream when I was still in Dion, and when I was still in doubt how to lay hold of

Asia, he exhorted me to put an end to delay, take heart and cross over. For he would lead me in my expedition and deliver to me the Persian empire. since then I have seen no one in these same clothes; but now that I do, and remembering also the vision and the exhortation, I think that I have undertaken this campaign on a Divine Mission, and that I shall gain victory over Darius and succeed in undoing Persian might, and in anything else I might wish.” Alexander next entered the city together with the High-Priest and the entire people. He went up to the temple and offered sacrifice there, and was also shown the book of *Daniel*, where, he realized, his future victories had been foretold.

The gist of the story is clear enough: the Jewish archpriest cannot accede to Alexander's request, because he is compelled by an oath to maintain his loyalties to Persia.⁷⁴ This debt of honor is cancelled, however, by God's dream-time epiphany to Yaddu'a, and by Alexander's unexpected recognition of God's name. The devolution of God's grace from Persia to Macedonia is sealed by the “discovery” of the prophecy about Alexander in *Daniel*. Josephus's story thus legitimizes Alexander and his world-changing campaign by making them a part of God's plan.

Josephus's story appears also to echo Isaiah's prophecy to Cyrus. In *Isaiah* Yhwh promises to go before Cyrus and lead him to victory. The same promise is made to Alexander in his dream.⁷⁵ Quite accidentally, Alexander's actions seemed to follow the prophet's very words. An important aspect of the prophecy to Cyrus deals with successful siege work: *to open doors before him and keep gates open...I shall break brazen doors and cut through iron bars.*⁷⁶ These words will have rung loudly after the dramatic sieges of Tyre and Gaza. Cyrus's prophecy promises him great treasures. One of the immediate results of Alexander's victory at Issos was the capture in Damascus of the opulent Persian war chest.⁷⁷

Unlike Cyrus, Alexander is nowhere styled “Messiah” or “shepherd.” However, according to Josephus's story and to the rabbinic parallels, Alexander surpasses even Cyrus in his relation to the God of Israel. When asked by Parmenion to explain his seemingly irrational behavior at the meeting with the Jewish archpriest, Alexander replies that this was not their first meeting: “For a man of this very same apparel appeared to me in a dream when I was still in Dion, and when I was still in doubt how to lay hold of Asia, he exhorted me to put an end to delay, take heart and cross over. For he would lead me in my expedition and deliver to me the Persian empire” (§334). Through his own epiphany Alexander not only receives Divine sanction for his attack on Persia, but also advances a step closer to God than had Cyrus before him. While the Persian King had remained ignorant of Yhwh (*I shall call you by your name, and you shall not know me*; 45:4),

Alexander is portrayed as a direct recipient of God's message informing him of his Divine role.⁷⁸ As in the *Midrash* of Ten Kings, Alexander is one step closer to God and his Kingdom.

ALEXANDER AND THE ESCHATON

At first glance, the texts and ideas discussed in this chapter may perhaps seem scattered, even detached from one another. They are nevertheless pulled together by two connective threads. The first is one of the most important ideas in Jewish thought—as central in antiquity as it is today—the notion of the *eschaton*, or the End of Days. The myth cycle of Gog and Magog relates to a final battle which is set to take place at the end of history, shortly before the final redemption of Israel. The renewal of true prophecy is assigned to the prophet Elijah, the destined forerunner of the Messiah. The *Midrash* of ten Kings traces the march of history, symbolized by eight human reigns and limited at both ends by the timeless Kingdom of God. All these involve an ostensible end to historical time, and the inauguration of a new mythical age.

This kind of eschatological thought revolves by its very nature around the elusive point of transition from *spatium historicum* to *spatium mythicum*, from profane to sacred time. This point leads us to the second thread connecting these seemingly divergent topics—the name and memory of Alexander the Great. His sudden appearance on the stage of history, as well as the enormous changes which he brought about, were surely enough to win him a place of honor in any ancient eschatological account. Yet of even greater importance is the fact that, as we have seen, Alexander conducted his entire life in a time that was at once both historical and mythical. And as both his career and his posthumous legacy demonstrate so well, for Alexander the boundary between myth and history was not so elusive after all.

It is thus clear why Alexander became so well entrenched in eschatological thought. An extreme example is preserved in the report of the Persian polymath Abu-Rayhan Muhammad Ibn-Aḥmad Birūnī (973–1048). According to his account, eschatological speculation of contemporary Jews expected the advent of the Messiah exactly 1335 years after Alexander.⁷⁹ To be sure, the convenient coincidence of the number 1335 (taken from *Daniel* 12:12) with the turn of the first millennium after Christ will have had something to do with the choice by Birūnī's contemporaries to count the years from Alexander. But the same purpose could be served also by using the regular Seleukid count.⁸⁰ The mention of Alexander in conjunction with messianic speculation based on the book of *Daniel* is hardly a coincidence, and testifies to Alexander's profound impact on Jewish eschatology.

The tantalizing evidence of Biruni bears witness not only to the depth of Alexander's involvement in Jewish eschatology, but also to his special position there. We do not know what the Jews who had actually met Alexander thought of him, or what place they found for him in their view of history. What we have at our disposal are late impressions, embedded in even later texts. By the time we get a glimpse of Alexander's role in world order, many long years had already passed since his death, and the march of history continued undisturbed.⁸¹ Thus, despite the deep mark he had left on history—as deep as any other individual has ever left—Alexander could not be signaled out as the man who put it to rest. His role was to be a different one: the instigator of a new age, the last stage in the course of history. His own advent marks also the beginning of the final countdown.

This role of Alexander is evident in the four fields surveyed here. In the Gog and Magog myth Alexander is vested with the authority to shut out the ultimate enemy beyond the limits of the civilized world. When they finally break out of their seclusion, Gog and company will mark the end of the last age of history, a stage begun by Alexander. A similar situation is manifest in *Daniel*, where Alexander's reign is the last before the coming of the Messiah. Based on this understanding of *Daniel* is the synchronization offered by the *Seder 'Olam*, whereby true prophecy stopped at the time of Alexander. The last period before the advent of Elijah and the Messiah is marked by the lack of true prophecy, the new age by its reappearance. This period, too, begins with Alexander. In the case of the *Midrash* of Ten Kings—which, too, relies heavily on *Daniel*—the picture is somewhat more complex, as Alexander is followed by two distinct Kingdoms, one of the Messiah, the other of God. Yet the essence of Alexander's role remains the same. His era is the penultimate one before the final Redemption, and in any case he is perceived as the precursor of the Messiah.

The memory and myth of Alexander therefore clearly form an integral part of Jewish eschatological thought. It is thus not too hazardous to assume that his name will have come up time and again in study and conversation, whenever events at the End of Days and the nature of the Messiah were discussed. The exact contents of such discussions, and the opinions expressed concerning Alexander, are anyone's guess. While his role as a ward against Gog and Magog was likely to engender a positive attitude (any enemy of Gog was a friend of Israel), Alexander's appearances in *Seder 'Olam* and in the *Midrash* of Ten Kings are devoid of judgment for good or ill, while those in *Daniel* have been interpreted as rather sinister.⁸² Yet at least some of these eschatological speculations will have been held in an atmosphere which was favorable to Alexander's memory, similar to

that displayed by Josephus's story of his visit to Jerusalem. As we shall see in the [next chapter](#), such putative discussions could have a major effect on the public perception of the longed-for Christ.

Alexander and Jesus

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three.

One lived and died for self; one died for you and me.

The Greek died on a throne; the Jew died on a cross;

One's life a triumph seemed; the other but a loss.

One led vast armies forth; the other walked alone;

One shed a whole world's blood; the other gave his own.

One won the world in life and lost it all in death;

The other lost his life to win the whole world's faith.

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three.

One died in Babylon; and one on Calvary.

One gained all for self; and one himself he gave;

One conquered every throne; the other every grave.

The one made himself God; The God made himself less;

The one lived but to blast; the other but to bless.

When died the Greek, forever fell his throne of swords;

But Jesus died to live forever Lord of lords.

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three.

The Greek made all men slaves; the Jew made all men free.

One built a throne on blood; the other built on love.

The one was born of earth; the other from above.

The one won all this earth, to lose all earth and heaven;

The other gave up all, that all to him be given.

The Greek forever died; the Jew forever lives.

*He loses all who gets, he wins all things who gives.*¹

The poem, titled “Jesus and Alexander,” makes a clear distinction between the two figures at the heart of this book. Their characters are diametrically opposed. The Macedonian lived a life of violence, enslaving those whom he met or drowning them in blood. “The Jew,” on the other hand, shed his own blood for the sake of humanity. Their personalities and situations are as different as can be: one was an agonistic and egotistic leader of men, the other walked selflessly and alone. The same dichotomy is apparent also in their respective fates: Alexander gained his victories in this world, Jesus is to do so in the next.

So why the comparison? One answer is given at the middle of the poem: “The one made himself God; The God made himself less.” We have seen how the example set by Alexander inspired a fashion of self-Divinization. The influence of this new-found fashion on the philosophy of religion is manifest in the famous theory of Euhemeros the Messenian. Euhemeros, a friend of Kassandros and practically a contemporary of Alexander, argued that Ouranos, Kronos and Zeus had all once been humans, and that they were deified as a reward for their benefactions to mankind.² With the precedent of Alexander so vividly in mind, Euhemeros could easily imagine that the grandest of Gods had once been human, too. More than anything, his claims serve to underscore the immense influence exerted by Alexander's life on theological thought. If one great man, through the magnitude of his achievements and continuous display of *aretē*, could become a God, surely so could have other great men in the past, and, according to the same logic, in the future. Indeed, in the centuries after Alexander we witness a long march of Divinized humans, from the lofty Emperors of Rome to the petty Antiochos of Kommagene. When it was time to compose the story of Jesus, the ground was already prepared.

Yet whence the number thirty-three? This particular detail, which underpins the entire structure of the poem, bears some further

reflection. That Alexander indeed died during his thirty-third year is undisputed.³ But what of Jesus? We can probably say something about the date of the Crucifixion,⁴ but no certain evidence exists concerning the date of Jesus' birth. According to Luke (3:23), Jesus was "about thirty years old" when he started his ministry. This would indeed make him about thirty-three at his death. John (8:57), on the other hand, gives a widely different estimate for Jesus' age. During a heated argument with some Pharisees in the temple, John's Jesus claims that Abraham the patriarch had seen him and was glad. The Pharisees, incredulous and scornful, ask in return, "You are not even fifty, and you have seen Abraham?" At this relatively early stage of his Mission John's Jesus is thus presented as a man in his late forties. Why, then, has Luke's Jesus gained the upper hand?

One might take a number of approaches in trying to answer this question. One simple argument would be that Luke's Jesus receives support from the Jesus portrayed by Mark and Matthew—if not concerning his age, certainly in many other details. Thus one could pose a three-against-one competition for popular consciousness concerning Jesus' age at the Crucifixion. A more elaborate channel of investigation might attempt to figure out which circles during the long history of Christianity were more akin to the synoptic Jesus, and which preferred John's. Nevertheless that cannot be the whole picture. Even if we postulate that the synoptic tradition (or its promulgators) has outweighed John's, we are still left with the question of the exact number. Why did Jesus die at thirty-three exactly?⁵

An answer can be sought by focusing not on the figure of Jesus and on his myth as a whole, but by looking at the building blocks of which it is built, its *gross constituent units*.⁶ The number thirty-three is one such distinct unit, a part of the story with a meaning unto itself, quite independent from other details. In memetic terms, the notion of "death at thirty-three" is a meme, whose sole aim is to replicate itself as often, as faithfully, and for as long a duration as possible. As stated above, for Alexander the number thirty-three is merely factual. It was not replicated from anywhere, but is rather a direct result of the historical person's actual lifespan. In the evolutionary process which molded (and still molds) Alexander's story, or meme-plex, it has practically no opposition and has very little difficulty in replicating. In the Jesus memeplex, on the other hand, the number thirty-three stands out. Indeed, it is supported by Luke's statement of Jesus' age at the beginning of his public career; yet the notion that this career lasted about three years derives from John (who mentions three Passovers during the Ministry), and John promulgates a much more mature Jesus at the Crucifixion. The "death at thirty-three" meme thus

had to survive fierce competition in the struggle to dominate the Jesus tradition.

My suggestion is that the close memetic affinity between Alexander and Jesus is the source of the notion that Jesus died exactly at thirty-three. This particular detail in the Jesus memplex thus receives support not only from the combination of Luke's age statement combined with John's chronology, but also from a great many other memes shared by both Jesus and Alexander. Some such memes are Divine sonship, dual paternity, virgin birth, moral choice in the face of Temptation, world rule, Mission for the benefit of humankind, death at a young age before the Mission is complete and, finally, *apotheosis*. In this chapter I address these (and other) memetic similarities, beginning from the Jewish context and moving to the Gentile.

A JEWISH SON OF GOD?!

The mythologies of Alexander and Jesus show many interesting parallels. For one, both myths use the venerable theme of Divine sonship. As usual, each son has two fathers. The name of Philip still looms large in practically every version of the Alexander story, while Joseph supplies Jesus with the crucial connection to the Messianic claims of the house of David.⁷ But while this notion was perfectly natural for Alexander, who counted Perseus, Herakles and Achilles among his ancestors, it strikes a jarring note in the context of second temple Judaism.⁸

Admittedly, Jewish tradition does not ignore the possibility of Divine sonship. *Genesis* 6:1–4 gives a laconic description of the phenomenon: the sons of God become enchanted with human women, and take some of them as wives. From this union is born a race of Heroes, famous men of yore. This theme is elaborated in the Ethiopic version of *Enoch*, where the incident is described as a rebellion of a faction of Angels, which descends to Earth on Mt. Hermon.⁹ Thus, both accounts recognize the possibility of Divine sons, but assign them to a Heroic age, a remote and inaccessible time before the Flood. In *Job* (1:6–12), too, we encounter an assembly of the sons of God. In *Job* the bellicosity of the *Genesis* story is replaced with a spirit of gentlemanly competition between God and Satan. However, both here and in the rebellion story the sons of God are supernatural beings, far removed from the human category of existence.

Much closer to the case at hand is the ambiguous claim for Divine sonship on behalf of the house of David. The first manifestation of this claim comes at a crucial point in David's reign, after the transportation of the Ark of the Covenant to the new capital in Jerusalem. Wishing to build a permanent dwelling place for the Ark of God, the King

consulted his court prophet, Nathan, who told him to listen to his own heart. Later, in the still of night, God spoke to the prophet in a dream, and reversed the prophet's ruling. The temple was only to be built by a fruit of the King's loins, at an unspecified time in the future. "He," thus spake God, "shall build a house for my name, and I shall establish his kingdom's throne forever. I will be to him a father, and he to me a son."¹⁰ A second pertinent instance of Davidic Divine sonship appears in *Psalms* 2. In this short hymn the poet, allegedly King David himself,¹¹ professes to have been told by Yhwh: "Thou art my son; today I have begotten thee" (2:7). This Psalm is especially important for our purpose, since it refers directly to the Messiah (2:2), implying that He is a son of Yhwh.

Indeed, both these scriptural allusions to Divine sonship have been used at a very early stage to promulgate Jesus' claim to the same status. At the beginning of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* (1:1-5) the anonymous author states that while in previous ages God had spoken to the fathers through the prophets (remember the end of prophecy in *Seder 'Olam*, treated in the [previous chapter](#)), in this End of Days God has spoken through his son. This son is greater even than the Angels (the other sons of God), for He especially has been designated by God as The son. The verses used to prove the point have been cited above: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son", and "Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee."

On the other hand, in either case a closer reading opens the door to a different, more allegorical interpretation of the Divine sonship allegation. In *II Samuel* 7:14 the verse reads: "I shall be to him as a father, and he shall be to me as a son"—quite a different understanding from that of King James' translation, given above.¹² This kind of understanding is evident in *II Corinthians* 6:18, where Paul paraphrases the same verse, using Divine paternity as a metaphor for the special relationship between God and the community of believers. Nor is *Psalms* 2:7 universally taken as a statement of Divine sonship. To be sure, the statement of paternity in this case is clear and decisive—"thou art my son."¹³ However, the second part of the verse—"today I have begotten thee"—raises a question as to the meaning of "today." Obviously, the poet (whether King David or someone else) is declared a son of Yhwh long after his natural birth. Accordingly, in *Acts* 13:33 Paul refers the verse not to Jesus' birth, but rather to his resurrection.¹⁴

We thus see that Davidic messianism certainly flirts with the notion of Divine sonship. However, the texts which support this flirtation were carefully worded in order to maintain a strong sense of ambiguity.¹⁵ All this is hardly surprising. Divine sonship presents grave theological and practical difficulties for strict monotheists. The

members of this ideological movement, which strives to seclude God and elevate Him above the sordid details of physical life, could hardly suffer Him to consort with mortal women, let alone father any offspring on them. On the other hand, Monotheism never existed in a world free from ideological competition. Quite the opposite, its faithful believers had been constantly exposed to the lures of polytheism, and examples of Divine sonship abounded in the Levant and elsewhere. The true nature of Christ thus encapsulates the conceptual paradox engendered by the attempt to create a monotheistic version of Divine sonship. This paradox has engaged generation after generation of theologians, in the attempt to answer one of the quintessential questions at the heart of Christianity: What is the nature of the son of God, if God Himself is indivisible and intangible?¹⁶

For mainstream Judaism this question was easily solved by the complete rejection of Jesus' messianic status in general, and his Divine sonship in particular. It is thus quite startling that while Jesus was vehemently rejected by Judaism, Alexander—a son of God and a Divinity in his own right—was often so warmly embraced by it. We have seen in the previous chapter that the best known and most influential Jewish Alexander-myth—the visit to Jerusalem—gives a strongly positive view of the Macedonian King. In fact, Josephus's is only one of four different tellings of the initial encounter between Alexander and the Jews, his visits to Jerusalem and the meetings with various priestly functionaries.¹⁷ All four tellings invariably display the same positive attitude of Alexander toward the Jews, and *vice versa*. This fact is neither banal, nor has it ever been a foregone conclusion. To begin, not everyone who had met Alexander, or lived in the world which he created, also approved of his character and deeds.¹⁸ Furthermore, the storm brewing in the first half of the second century B.C., which climaxed with the religious persecution instituted by Antiochos IV Epiphanes and his Jewish collaborators, has left deep scars in Jewish memory, and led to highly critical opinions of Alexander himself at the time.¹⁹

The question of Jewish fondness for Alexander cannot, of course, be answered without first establishing the extent and quality of the historical kernel at the heart of these manifestly mythical accounts. Luckily, that discussion lies outside the scope of this book. suffice it to say that if one accepts the historicity of a highly positive initial meeting between Alexander and the Jews of Jerusalem,²⁰ fondness for his memory would seem quite natural. If, on the other hand, one joins the *communis opinio* in seeing the stories as a fictitious edifice erected in order to legitimize Jewish claims for civil rights, or to convey “a sense of self-assurance about the Jews' own special role within the

universe of the Hellenistic kingdoms,”²¹ they nevertheless remain a testimony to the magnetic power of Alexander's myth and to the positive perception of his memory.

The implications of Alexander *historicus* could be ignored neither by historians nor by theologians. We have seen in the [previous chapter](#) how Alexander *mythicus* came to occupy a unique place in Jewish eschatological thought, as representing the last stage of history, at the very threshold of the *eschaton*. It is easy to see how some Jews, favorable to Alexander's memory and impressed by the immensity of his legacy, could tip the scale toward a more literal understanding of the notion of Divine sonship, and actually warm up to the idea of a Messiah who was also a son of God and a Divinity in His own right.²²

SYNCRETISM IN THE FAMILY

The theological and mythological notion of Divine sonship is an obvious point of similarity between Alexander and Jesus. This similarity is taken a step further when one examines the identity of their respective Divine Fathers. Alexander, as is well known, was allegedly the son of Zeus-Ammon. In the same way, Jesus was reputed to be the son of the God of Israel. It is thus highly significant that Zeus and Yhwh had been identified as different cultural manifestations of the same entity at an early stage of the encounter between Judaism and Hellenism. The anonymous author of the *Letter of Aristeas* (probably a second-century B.c. Jew pretending to be a third-century Gentile) could state without qualms that the same God who had given the Jews their laws was the one called by the Greeks Zeus or Dios.²³ Nor was the identification of Zeus with Yhwh limited to the circles which produced the *Letter of Aristeas*. The eminent first-century B.c. Roman scholar Terentius Varro thought that the “God of the Jews” was essentially the same as Jupiter. It did not matter what name one called him, as long as the same thing was meant.²⁴ In the late second century c .E . the Greek philosopher Celsus could argue that “it makes no difference whether you call the highest being Zeus, or Zen, or Adonai, or sabaoth, or Ammoun like the Egyptians, or Pappaeus like the scythians.”²⁵ In the following century an inscription from Asturica Augusta, in the northeastern quarter of the Iberian peninsula, asserted that “Zeus, serapis, Iao are one!”²⁶ A fourth-century c.E. papyrus, combining oracles of serapis with practical magic, invokes serapis by the additional names of Zeus, Adonai, Lord Iao, sabaoth, God of Abraham, and much more besides.²⁷ According to the oracle of Apollo on Klaros (as cited by Macrobius in the fifth century c.E.), the multifaceted Iao was the loftiest of all Gods, appearing as Hades in winter, Zeus in spring, Helios in summer and Habros Iao in autumn.²⁸

To the ardent monotheist these syncretisms may seem offensive, even obnoxious. But in antiquity ardent monotheists never constituted more than a fraction of human society. On the other hand, for the vast majority of the population at the time, whether they were Hellenizing Jews, Gentile God-fearers, or run-of-the-mill polytheists, there was nothing alarming in the identification of the Jewish God with Zeus, of Zeus with Ammon and Serapis, and all of them with Jupiter.²⁹ The theological ramifications of the familial relation between Alexander and Jesus are immense. If the vast majority of Mediterranean and Near Eastern populations in the first few centuries C.E. could regard *Yhwh*, Zeus and Ammon as merely different appellations of the same entity, then by the same logic Herakles, Alexander and Jesus were all half-brothers!³⁰

The three siblings have much in common. As we have seen, all three are Divine sons, their myths retain the motif of dual paternity, and their Divine Fathers were widely identified with one another. Their special status accounts also for their translation from the human to the Divine realm. But that is not all. Herakles, Alexander and Jesus are also ecumenical figures, perceived as benefactors and saviors of humanity. In the Hesiodic *Shield of Herakles* the Hero is portrayed as especially begotten by Zeus to be a protector of both men and Gods from destruction. According to Theokritos he is to be the ruler not only of mankind, but of all wild beasts as well.³¹

The notion of Herakles as world ruler and ultimate champion of humanity shows most clearly in Dio Chrysostom (born only a few years after the Crucifixion of Jesus). In his first *Oration* Dio claims that Herakles ruled not only over Argos and Greece, but over the entire world, from sunrise to sunset, and over all people, among whom one finds his shrines. The same mandate is reiterated at the end of the oration, where Herakles is appointed by Zeus to be King of the entire race of men, and is styled “savior of the earth and of humanity.”³²

In his treatise Chrysostom plays on the tradition of Herakles' choice. In the older version of the story, told by old man Prodikos and recounted by Xenophon,³³ young Herakles is approached by two distinguished Ladies: *Arete* and *Kakia* (*Eudaimonia*, to her friends). Lady Badness works all her charms to tempt Herakles, offering him a life of complete leisure and every imaginable pleasure to fill it with. *Arete*, on the other hand, offers a life of toil and effort. Herakles must worship the Gods, be a good friend, benefit the cities, and devote his life to the good of all Hellas. His reward is the company of steadfast friends in this world, and a proud legacy in the next. Chrysostom picks up the story of Herakles' choice, adapting it to his own needs. In his telling Zeus sends Hermes to Thebes, to test the mettle of young Herakles. Hermes takes his younger half-brother on a mysterious trip,

culminating at the feet of a lofty mountain with twin peaks. On each peak sits a woman. On one, consecrated to Royal Zeus, dwells Kingship, accompanied by justice, order, peace, good counsel and right reason. On the other peak, belonging to Typhon, reigns Tyranny, in company with cruelty, hubris, lawlessness and civil war. When Hermes asks which Lady he prefers, Herakles naturally chooses the former.³⁴

This tradition of Herakles' choice is strongly reminiscent of another, better known story, the Temptation of Christ.³⁵ The story begins when the spirit takes Jesus to the desert, to prepare for his trial. After forty days of fasting, as he is finally starting to work up an appetite, the Devil appears to Jesus and suggests that he turn the rocks into bread. Jesus refuses. Rebuffed once, the Devil then whisks Jesus away to Jerusalem, and offers him admission into the very temple. Jesus refuses a second time, arguing (on the basis of *Deuteronomy* 6:16), that it is improper to involve God in a trial. Consequently, satan takes Jesus to his own mountain peak and makes his final offer—Kingship over the entire world.³⁶ Like Herakles, Jesus is at this point at the very beginning of his career. Like Herakles, he is offered, and refuses, world rule. Like Herakles, he prefers the good over the bad. A Greek contemporary of Chrysostom could easily make the connection between the two stories. The similarities between these myths of Herakles and Jesus are as obvious as the profound difference between the mythological frameworks to which they belong.³⁷

Of Alexander it was harder to tell such a tale. His real life story, which is characterized at every point by hard and fast decisiveness and dogged determination, has little room for deliberative soul searching.³⁸ Nevertheless, an account of Alexander deriving from the same time as Chrysostom displays a not dissimilar scene. At the beginning of the first oration *De Fortuna Alexandri* (331f-332c) Plutarch posits a temptation which might have lured Alexander away from his goal to conquer the world and imbue it with Greek civilization—the practice of pure Philosophy. The meeting with Diogenes the cynic, so Plutarch says, left a deep impression on Alexander. A young man still, like Herakles and Jesus at their own trials of temptation, Alexander was awed and astounded by the lifestyle of the great philosopher. At later times he would say, “If I were not Alexander, I should be Diogenes.” But like his ancestral role model and his mythological heir, he refused the temptation of theoretical philosophy, leading to a life of relative leisure, and opted for the toils and travails of a world Mission, Divinely ordained, for the benefit of all humankind.

Another meme replicated in the myths of Herakles, Alexander and

Jesus is the Hero's untimely death. Herakles, Alexander and Jesus never grow old. Rather, they move on from this world to the next exactly when they reach their prime. Yet another replicated meme is that of death through betrayal and deceit. Herakles finds his death through the naïve machinations of his jealous wife, Deianeira, and the cunning vengeance of the centaur Nessos. Alexander, so at least many in antiquity thought, was assassinated by the faction of Antipatros, possibly even in collaboration with his old master Aristotle. Jesus, in turn, was neglected by his sleepy disciples and betrayed by Judas. The early deaths of all three figures will have made it that much easier for a religious person of the first centuries c.E. to relate each of them to the other. As memeplexes, all three share the “untimely death” meme.

Yet the world of affinities enjoyed and employed by the myths of Alexander and Jesus does not end with Herakles. In Egypt, where Alexander first gained official recognition of his Divine sonship, and Christianity gained one of its earliest prominent bastions of faith, both were inextricably bound with Horus, one of the most ancient and influential Divinities of the land. We have seen above how Alexander's coronation as Pharaoh—whether historical or mythical—also brought him into close orbit with Horus. The mythology of this God, including his manifestations as Harpokrates and Herishef (products of the venerable tradition of Egyptian syncretism and already well established at the time of Alexander's arrival), provides many more points of similarity to the Herakles-Alexander-Jesus memetic complex.³⁹

For one, the God, incarnate in every living Pharaoh, was also a protector against wild animals, especially snakes. This role of Horus the younger (Harpokrates) reminded the Greeks of their own Herakles, who already as a baby managed to strangle the two snakes sent by Hera to destroy him.⁴⁰ Alexander, too, despite his draconian origin, could be portrayed as a defender of civilized life, in this instance of his own illustrious Alexandria in Egypt, against harmful reptiles.⁴¹ In orthodox Christian mythology the “great dragon, that ancient serpent, so called Devil and satan,” assumes a central position as the representative and captain of the forces of evil.⁴² Jesus and John the Baptist referred to their enemies as “vipers and children of vipers”; st. Paul, during his short stop in Malta, was miraculously saved from a snakebite, with the result that the locals came to think of him as a God!⁴³

Another point of similarity between Alexander and Horus derives from a different aspect of the father-and-son relationship. Alexander, never relinquishing his connection with his mortal father, took care to present himself as the avenger of Philip's murder. significantly, Alexander's question at siwah, whether his father's murder had been

fully avenged, serves at the same time both to emphasize his human connection, and to supply the required provocation for Ammon's priest to establish his Divine aspect.⁴⁴ The most famous Horus myth deals with his efforts to avenge the death of his father Osiris, and his struggle against the murderer, Seth. The story is a cornerstone of Egyptian mythology.⁴⁵ The two stories intersect in the *Romance* portion which tells of Nektanebo's deeds in Macedonia and of Alexander's consequent arrival in Egypt.⁴⁶ In this telling, the Egyptian King, Horus in life and Osiris in death, fathers Alexander as a future redeemer and avenger of Egyptian defeat by the Persians. This romantic Alexander thus retains the duty of avenging his father, but exchanges the Macedonian Philip for the Egyptian Nektanebo-Osiris.

The affinity to Horus brings to light also Apollo, yet another son of Zeus and the Greek God most commonly identified with the Egyptian solar Deity.⁴⁷ The relationship of Alexander and Apollo is somewhat ambivalent. The incident at Delphi, reported by Plutarch, shows some impudence (not to say hubris) on the part of the young and impetuous Alexander. Yet this story does not end in tears, but rather with laughter. Furthermore, a Sicilian-oriented portion of the *Romance* casts Alexander in the role of Herakles, and puts in his mouth a threat to confiscate the prophetic tripod of Phoebos.⁴⁸ The very ambivalence of the stories serves to underscore a basic fact: in the realm of mythology Alexander was perceived as a worthy adversary to Apollo. Even in the version of the *Romance*, which recognizes the superiority of the God, Alexander nevertheless remains undefeated, and is recognized as a worthy adversary of Apollo, and a proper heir to, perhaps even an incarnation of Herakles.

The classic role of Horus-Apollo as a solar God resonates with the light motif associated with both Alexander and Jesus. In the *De Fortuna* Plutarch presents Alexander's cosmic task as the education of humanity. Had he been allowed to fulfill his Mission, "one law would rule all men, and all would look to one just cause as to a common light." In fact, it was better to have been conquered and educated by Alexander, than not to have known him at all. The miserable inhabitants of that part of the world which Alexander never reached were left in darkness, as if the sun had never shone on them.⁴⁹ The same imagery is immanent in the portrayal of Jesus by the Evangelist John, as the primordial Light, enlightening all of humanity.⁵⁰ In Matthew's account the beginning of Christ's ministry is perceived, in similar fashion, as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, "The people who walk in darkness saw a great light; a light shone on the dwellers of the land of death's shadow."⁵¹

We have seen thus far how the myths of Alexander and Jesus share a number of memes with other mythical entities, such as Herakles,

Horus, even Apollo. Among the many striking similarities bringing these figures together the notion of Divine sonship looms large. This special status serves to distinguish those who enjoy it from the ordinary Heroes. It creates an exclusive group of siblings (inasmuch as the Father figures are identified with one another), and paves the way for their full deification (whether already in life, like Horus, Apollo and Alexander, or only after their death, like Herakles and Jesus). Yet this model must remain partial and incomplete, unless it takes into account a third, and crucial, part of the family group—Mother.

At first glance, the mothers of Alexander and Jesus seem as different as can be. Olympias was a powerful and ambitious woman, steeped in blood, magic and mystery. Mary, on the other hand, is the paragon of humility and acquiescence. Yet the myths of both ladies nonetheless have one crucial trait in common, closely connected to the principle of Divine sonship. Both Mary and Olympias were involved in the creational miracle of virgin birth.⁵²

As we have seen, Plutarch's telling of Alexander's conception makes it absolutely clear that Olympias became aware of her impregnation with Alexander *before* the consummation of her marriage to Philip.⁵³ The same principle applies to Mary's pregnancy with Jesus. The Evangelist Matthew describes the situation in plain and unambiguous terms: "The *genesis* of Jesus Christ was thus: his mother, Mary, was betrothed to Joseph; yet before they came together she was found to have (a child) in her belly of the Holy Ghost." Luke makes a similar claim: the angel Gabriel is sent to Mary, a betrothed but still unwedded maiden. When he blesses the young woman as the future mother of the King and savior, she replies with amazement, "How can that be, when I know not any man?" The message is crystal clear: Jesus was born without intercourse between his Mother and any flesh-and-blood human.⁵⁴

The two conception stories bear striking similarities. To begin with, both mothers experience an epiphany *before* their marriages are consummated. Gabriel's visit to Mary, informing her of her pregnancy, parallels Olympias's dream after her engagement: "on the night before she came together (with Philip) into the wedding chamber, there was a thunderclap, and lightning seemed to her to fall on her stomach." As with Mary, Olympias presumably conceived Alexander before Philip had an opportunity to consummate the marriage. As with Joseph, Philip too had an epiphany, but this came only at a later time, *after* the wedding night.⁵⁵ The initial response of both mortal husbands is also similar: they suspect the integrity of their brides (Philip according to the advice of his soothsayers, Joseph by his own suspicion). In both cases the epiphany absolves the mother from any wrongdoing, and the husband is told to expect a remarkable progeny.⁵⁶

Mary fits well also into the wider framework provided by the parallel cases of Divine sons discussed above. For example, she shares some basic traits with one of the greatest Mothers of late antiquity—Isis. Perhaps the most memorable image of Isis shows her holding and breastfeeding her infant child, Horus-Harpokrates. The representation of Isis *Lactans* is both ancient and ubiquitous. It also bears a strong resemblance to the famous icons of Mary, breastfeeding baby Jesus. It has even been suggested that the iconography of Mary *Lactans* is based on the age-old iconography of Isis, as preserved in household cults, stretching back over millennia.⁵⁷ We thus see that these Mother and son configurations, Isis-Horus and Mary-Jesus have a great deal in common.⁵⁸

The two sets of relationships, Father-son and Mother-son, naturally combined to create a family of three. This trinitarianism was a venerable tradition of Egyptian myth. The archetypal model of the triad family was that of Osiris-Isis-Horus.⁵⁹ In Hellenistic times Osiris became subsumed into the newly created serapis, and Horus Hellenized as Herakles.⁶⁰ As we have seen, the inherently integrative serapis could be, and indeed was, identified with the Greek Father of the Gods, Zeus. This realm of mythic and cultic allusion applies to Alexander as well. His recognition as Pharaoh (it matters little whether already in his lifetime or only posthumously) made him a son of Ammon, but also brought him into the same orbit as Horus, the archetypal son of Egyptian myth. As such he will have been automatically recognized as the son of Isis. Along the same lines, his Father would be Osiris-serapis, widely identified with Zeus.

The place occupied by Alexander in the familial triangular model, and his in-terchangeability with that of Jesus, is best exemplified in the case of Justinian's religious reforms in the north-African town of Augila.⁶¹ According to the historian Procopius of Caesarea, in the sixth century C.E., nearly a millennium after Alexander, the population of Augila still maintained the religion and cult of Ammon and Alexander. This practice went on uninterrupted until the reign of Justinian. But this benevolent Emperor, who cared not only for the physical welfare of his subjects but also for their souls, abolished their diseased polytheistic customs, converted them to Christianity and taught them the doctrine of true faith. In order to ensure the success of their spiritual salvation, so Procopius says, Justinian merely had to bestow upon them a church for the Mother of God. This alone was lacking. May we not deduce from the silence of Procopius that the existing buildings, dedicated to Father and son, continued in service under new guises, Ammon's temple now serving God, and Alexander's Jesus?⁶²

We have seen so far how the myth of Alexander, created during his lifetime and developed after his death, is memetically interconnected with a number of ancient Divinities, who in turn share the same memes with the myth of Jesus. We have also seen how the positive reaction to the memory of Alexander within certain circles of second temple Judaism could help pave the way for these polytheistic memes into the very heart of monotheistic tradition. But how important was Alexander in this process? Could not ancient Mediterranean and Mesopotamian myths influence Christian theology regardless of Alexander?⁶³

This kind of question cannot be answered categorically, if only for the reason that one cannot replay history without Alexander. Yet a comparison of the histories and myths of Alexander and Jesus shows a number of similarities, which are unique to these two and are not shared by any of the Divinities and Heroes discussed above. The first, crucial point of similarity is that both figures were fully historical, flesh-and-blood characters. It might be told that Herakles was born human, and that only after his death was he translated to the ranks of the Divine. But his story, told and retold so often both in antiquity and in modern times, traditionally assumes the shape of myth, not history. The historical career of Alexander, on the other hand, wrought far-reaching and irreversible changes on both the history and the theology of western civilization. Before him, *apotheosis* was about as rare as spoken Greek in the highlands of Bactria. In this respect, the myth of Jesus signifies the acceptance of Alexander's precedent of Divinization by believers in a monotheistic faith.

This last statement is demonstrated by the line of reasoning of Justin Martyr, in his attempt to explain apparent similarities between the myths of Dionysos, Herakles and Asklepios, and the Gospels' words about Jesus. Confronted by the embarrassing parallels between Jesus and the Hellenic Hero-Gods, and the even more embarrassing fact that their stories had been in wide circulation for centuries before Jesus' birth, Justin comes up with a simple solution: he who is called the Devil caused such stories to be told among the Hellenes, just as he had bestowed supernatural powers on the sorcerers of Egypt and the false prophets in the time of Elijah.⁶⁴

This remark of Justin's is highly instructive. To begin, it highlights some common traits of Jesus and his three competitors: Dionysos is cited for Divine sonship and resurrection, Herakles for his ecumenical nature, Asklepios for his ability to heal.⁶⁵ But that is not all. Justin was so disturbed by these similarities, as well as by the chronological seniority of the polytheistic Divinities, that he resorted to the age-old narratological device of *Deus ex machina* in order to resolve his

difficulty. Hence the introduction of the Devil into the argument. such means are perfectly acceptable in the realm of theology, Justin's literary genre of choice. History, on the other hand, cannot allow for Divine Intervention of any sort. Yet if we take into account the influence exerted by Alexander on the theological thought of late antiquity in general, and on early Christianity in particular, the tension felt by Justin can be relieved without resorting to metaphysical argumentation.

The myths of Alexander and Jesus are connected by yet another motif which offers a metaphysical combination of the historical and the mythic—Resurrection. The story of Jesus is famous enough, and need not be rehearsed in too much detail. On the third day after the Crucifixion, Jesus came back to life. At first he appeared to some of his female followers (Mary Magdalene appears in all four Gospels). He then reappeared a number of times before his male disciples, in Judean Emmaus and in a number of locales in Galilee. Nor was it a ghost or an apparition which took his place: he showed his flesh-and-blood body to the disciples, and even ate a bit of fish. A second, more dramatic resurrection, was scheduled as the climax of the End of Days.⁶⁶

The story of Alexander's resurrection is more obscure, appearing in Cassius Dio's account of the year 221 C.E.:⁶⁷

Just before this, a *daimon*, calling himself Alexander of Macedon and resembling him in appearance and dress, set off from the region of the Danube—having arisen there in some way—and traveled through Moesia and Thrace, conducting Bacchic rites, with 400 men equipped with wands and faun-skins, but doing no harm. All those who were then in Thrace attest that accommodations and provisions were provided for him at public expense. Not a soul, neither governor nor soldier nor procurator, nor the magistrates of the local communities, dared to withstand him or say anything against him, and he traveled as far as Byzantium in a sort of formal progress, traveling by day and with announcements of his coming in advance. From there he crossed to Chalkedon, carried out some rites at night, made a hollow wooden horse, and disappeared.

The story is a strange one indeed, and raises a series of questions. Who was the man at the center of the action? Dio argued that it was a *Daimon*, but as historians we cannot accept his claim. What did this pseudo-Alexander aim to achieve with his display? If his procession carried with it any political implications, they remain obscure. To be sure, the march, as far as it went, was not directed against any center of Roman Imperial power. And how did the man disappear? Did he entertain dangerous political aspirations, either Imperial or local? Were his claims particularly offensive to the religious feeling of some powerful agent? Was it the public expense that aroused anger against him? Was he disappeared? Or did he merely retire to obscurity once the

charade was over?

Given the paucity of information at our disposal, these questions seem quite insoluble. Yet this fantastic story makes better sense in light of the dramatic usage of Alexander's memory made by the Emperor Caracalla. This Emperor, whose reign preceded Alexander's resurrection by a few years, was an avid fan of the Macedonian King. Already at a young age Caracalla looked up to Alexander as a role model. He took care to use weapons and drinking vessels which he thought had once belonged to Alexander. Like Nero before him he drafted a special "Alexander's phalanx," comprised of young Macedonian recruits, and equipped them with traditional Macedonian arms. The commanders of this special legion bore the names of Alexander's own generals. Caracalla could not bear to hear anyone speak ill of his Macedonian Hero, and Aristotelian philosophers were especially despised and persecuted by him, because of the suspicion that Aristotle himself was involved in Alexander's death. By the Emperor's order, statues and pictures of Alexander were put on display in all cities of the Empire, and especially in Rome, where his image came to dominate the public sphere. All this was done to suggest that Caracalla was a second Alexander. Indeed, at one point "he actually wrote to the senate that Alexander had come to life again in the person of the Augustus (*i.e.* himself), that he might live on once more in him, having had such a short life before."⁶⁸

Such a statement carried with it profound political implications. As Augustus, Caracalla embodied in himself the political and religious *auctoritas* gained over two centuries of Empire. By declaring himself a reincarnation of Alexander and assuming both his essence and his authority Caracalla added a new dimension to the nature of Roman rule. Looking at the process from the Macedonian side, one could say that Alexander *mythicus* now succeeded where Alexander *historicus* never had a chance to try his strength—the King of Macedonia was now also King at Rome.⁶⁹ The Assumption of Alexander by Caracalla can thus be seen as representing a slippage of the Empire to the East.⁷⁰

Events which took place in the Balkans in the decade before the bizarre pageant of pseudo-Alexander help to contextualize it further. Most relevant to the case at hand is Caracalla's visit to Alexander's homeland in 214 C.E. Having visited the garrison on the Danube, the Emperor marched south, more or less in the footsteps of Alexander after his own Danubian campaign. Once the Emperor entered Thrace, so the historian Herodian says, "he immediately became Alexander!"⁷¹ Herodian presents this transformation as the onset of Caracalla's Alexander emulation, but according to the Emperor's biography in the *Historia Augusta* his fascination with Alexander can already be dated to

his days as a young adult. In any case, this Alexander mania seems to have been shared both by Roman Emperors and by their Macedonian provincials. A few years after the visit, the Emperor Elagabalus (218–222 C.E.) instituted in Beroia the “Alexandreia,” festive games which celebrated both the Emperor of Rome and the memory of Alexander. For the occasion local mints in Macedonia started a new issue of Alexander coins, with his own face in place of that of the Emperor. The minting of these coins continued uninterrupted for some three decades.⁷²

It thus seems that pseudo-Alexander was very much a part of his *Zeitgeist*. For this reason, it is also highly instructive regarding the religious reality of the time, especially in connection with Alexander's name. It appears that the populace in and around Alexander's own fatherland was ready and willing to accept the notion that he might come back to life. It is one thing to recognize the claims of a Nero *Redivivus*, at a time when the real historical figure might possibly still be alive. It is quite another to accept the presence of a flesh-and-blood Alexander half a millennium after his death. One is hard pressed to think of other examples from antiquity for the expectation that a historical figure should come back to life in the flesh—except for Jesus.⁷³

Another figure which shares many of the common characteristics of Alexander and Jesus (including the obligatory journey to India; see previous note) is the famous philosopher, sorcerer and religious reformer Apollonios of Tyana. Like Alexander and Jesus, Apollonios too straddles the divide between history and myth. Albeit a fully historical figure, the state of the sources concerning his life and acts makes it extremely hard for the modern scholar to distinguish fact from fiction.⁷⁴ The figure of Apollonios received its definitive description in the early third century, in an extensive treatise written by Philostratos “the Athenian,” and commissioned by Iulia Domna, the great mother of the severan dynasty and mother of Caracalla. This image of Apollonios bears striking resemblances to both Alexander and Jesus.

The similarities to Alexander begin already with Apollonios's birth stories. According to one account, just before giving birth to Apollonios his mother had a vision. In it, an Egyptian *Daimon* presented itself to her as “Proteus, the Egyptian God.” When she asked the apparition what she would bear, it replied, “Myself.” This incident resonates with the story of Nektanebo and Olympias. In both cases the mother of a future Great is visited by a demonic shape-changer from Egypt. In both cases, the offspring is destined to be identified, in some

way or another, with his father. A second account, told by Apollonios's own townsfolk, makes him the son of Zeus, and thus a full half-brother of Alexander (and a great many other Heroes and Gods).⁷⁵

Later on in his life Apollonios follows in Alexander's footsteps, all the way to India. That Apollonios (or at least Philostratos) had Alexander in mind is obvious. For example, we are told that during their journey in the Hindu Kush mountains Apollonios and his companion Damis failed to visit the rock Aornos. Although not too distant from Nysa, which they did visit, it lay off their path and their guide was loath to make the detour. This *en passant* remark proves that Apollonios's journey, as described by Philostratos, retraced that of Alexander (otherwise, why mention Aornos, a place which he did not visit?). Furthermore, in Taxila Apollonios visited a temple of the sun, where he saw the golden statues of Alexander and Poros, and even an ancient elephant, which was said to have taken part in the famous battle between the two Kings! The animal was presumably dedicated by Alexander to the sun, and had survived for nearly four centuries. Nor did Apollonios neglect to visit Alexander's famous altar at the Hyphasis, the easternmost terminus of his campaign.⁷⁶

The similarities between Apollonios and Jesus, on the other hand, had become a topic of theological and historical discussion already in late antiquity.⁷⁷ Their myths certainly share some essential gross constituent units or unifying memes. One is Divine sonship, shared also with Alexander. Another is the ability of the two characters to heal the sick, often by the exorcism of Demons. The medicinal miracles of Jesus are ubiquitous in the Gospels. As for Apollonios, we are told that he at one time exposed and helped destroy a canine *Daimon*, which had scourged Ephesos with a plague. At another he expelled a *Daimon* from the body of a young resident of Athens; the youth, who regained his senses thanks to Apollonios's efforts, quitted his sybaritic lifestyle and turned into an admirer of philosophy. Finally, and most impressively, Apollonios brought back to life a young maiden, who had died on the eve of her nuptials, this time in Rome.⁷⁸

Another Apollonios story which closely resonates with the Jesus myth is his posthumous reappearance in Tyana, in order to establish the truth about the nature of life, death and the human soul.⁷⁹ This episode, which concludes the work of Philostratos, brings Apollonios close to Jesus (whose Mission, too, carried important lessons about the very same subjects), but also to Alexander. All three *Redi-vivi*, each in his peculiar way, carried a message of consolation to humanity. Whether by the practice of *arete*, the pursuit of philosophical wisdom, or the faith in the sole God and his son, any human could defy the anguish and frustration of this mortal coil. It is thus almost natural to

find the statues of all three residing side by side in peaceful company in the private bed-side chapel of the Emperor severus Alexander.⁸⁰

Yet Alexander *mythicus* was something more than a moral paragon for human behavior. In Plutarch's twin speeches *De Fortuna Alexandri* he is displayed as an idealized image, an ecumenical and beneficent philosopher-King, carrying on his narrow shoulders the unfathomable burden of a Divinely ordained world Mission. His mainstay in this Mission was neither his invincible war machine nor his Divine origin, but rather an extraordinary assortment of positive qualities, all of which he owed to the study of philosophy. In Plutarch's words, Alexander owed his success more to Aristotle than to Philippos.⁸¹

The nature of his Mission was to put the lessons of philosophy to good use, and pass on the lofty values of Hellenic culture to the uneducated masses of the world. In this capacity he taught the Hyrkanians to practice marriage, the Arachosians to till the land, the sogdians to take care of their fathers rather than kill them, the Persians to respect their mothers rather than marry them, the Indians to worship Greek Gods, and the skythians to bury, not eat, their dead.⁸² Through his efforts Alexander was to create in the real world a replica of Zeno's ideal state. It was to be a place where humanity lived undivided, either by homestead or by state, where everyone recognized their fellow humans as belonging to the same polity, living one life and ruled by one law. This vision bears far-reaching implications: the citizens of the world state are not determined by their political or racial origins, but rather by moral merit. In short, every good man was Greek; every wicked man a barbarian.⁸³

The status of Alexander is defined in accordance with his vast Mission. Alexander is a "common God-sent ruler and harmonizer," sent by Arete herself to accomplish this task, both Kingly and Divine.⁸⁴ Whatever pain and suffering his military campaigns may have caused, they were nothing in comparison with the great benefits to be reaped thereby. His conquests rescued ignorant people from their pathetic little lives. Those who have been conquered by him were far luckier than those who have escaped him, continuing their miserable existence like people who had never seen the light of day (328e; 330d). In fact, only one person before him had been up to such an enormous task, his predecessor and half-brother Herakles. But whereas Herakles was prevented from taking on this responsibility by the jealousy of Hera and the machinations of Eurystheus, Alexander was hindered at every step by invidious *Tyche*, and was eventually called back to Heaven by some unknown *Daimon*, and thus prevented from fulfilling the purpose for which he was sent to this world.⁸⁵

It is thus easy to see how an admirer of *De Fortuna's* Alexander could be attracted by the promises of Christianity. Both Alexander and Jesus offered a world where everyone could be a citizen, where every man and woman were measured by their own merit and faith, where character was more important than birth. Both visions are ecumenical in nature, both are imbued by a missionary zeal. Both are firmly based in the Greek language, current from the gates of India to the shores of the Mediterranean. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, both Alexander and Jesus were historical persons, more tangible than the vast array of Gods and Heroes who swelled the ranks of polytheistic mythology.⁸⁶

MY ENEMY, MY FRIEND

Looking back at the multiple memetic meeting points between Alexander and Jesus, it is small wonder that the Roman Empire, which so venerated Alexander in the third century, embraced Christianity in the fourth. Yet at the time the two figures could also stand in stark opposition. In fact, Alexander served for a while as one of the rallying points for the polytheistic resistance to the advent of Christianity.

The most prominent figure in the polytheistic resistance movement is doubtless the last non-Christian Roman Emperor—Julian the Apostate. During his short reign, he tried to turn back the clock on the religious reforms of Constantine and his heirs, providing a new, invigorated system of polytheistic faith and cult. How successful his attempt would have been is impossible to say. Together with empire, Julian also inherited an ongoing war with sassanid Persia. setting out to fulfill his destiny, Julian marched east at the head of his army. Taking part in battle he was mortally wounded, and his religious reforms died with him.

Given the context of a military campaign against Persia and the precedents of Alexander veneration by Roman emperors, it is not surprising to read that Julian, too, was identified with the Macedonian. According to socrates scholasticus, a Greek church historian who wrote some two or three generations after the event, Julian indeed openly identified himself with Alexander. To quote his own words, Julian “thought that he had Alexander's soul, or rather that he himself was Alexander in another body”.⁸⁷ This testimony is admittedly secondhand, and comes from a source hostile to the apostate Emperor's memory. Yet it makes good sense. We have seen how the Emperor Caracalla had identified himself as an Alexander *redi-vivus*, and how a reincarnation of Alexander could gain public recognition and support in the Balkans and Asia Minor. And while the evidence of socrates cannot perhaps be taken as proof that Julian did

in fact believe that he was a latter-day Alexander, it demonstrates undeniably that the figure of Alexander could be perceived as a dominant force in anti-Christian propaganda.

Another example for the ire aroused in Christian circles by Alexander veneration comes from John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople at the turn of the fifth century c.E., in his twenty-sixth homily on *II Corinthians*.⁸⁸ Well into his sermon, which deals mostly with st. Paul's cautious, self-conscious humility, Chrysostom turns to admonish his readers against the tendency to regard some people more highly than they deserve. such undeserved regard, says Chrysostom, is the origin of idolatry. This euhemeristic claim is supported by the example of none other than Alexander: "Thus the Roman senate decreed Alexander to be the thirteenth God, for it possessed the privilege of electing and enrolling Gods."⁸⁹ The divinity of Christ, on the other hand, was not marred by such hubristic behavior, since the senate resented the fact that Christ's glory and divine status became famous worldwide even without a senatorial decree.

Chrysostom's line of argument relies on a story, current from at least the early third century c.E., regarding the conversion of Pilate to Christianity and his report concerning Jesus to the Emperor Tiberius.⁹⁰ A more elaborate telling, deriving from Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* (2.2), conveys the following story: Following an ancient custom that all provincial governors should report to the Emperor any event of note, Pilate sent to Tiberius a communication concerning Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and popularly perceived divinity. Tiberius referred the matter to the senate, which in turn refused to allow Jesus divine status. As in Chrysostom, the apparent reason was the senate's indignation at the fact that its prerogative of initiative had been usurped by popular recognition. The true reason, Eusebius says, was that Christ's divine teaching and salvation needed no ratification or recommendation from mere men.

We need not worry here about the historicity of the story. What matters is that such a story was current in the early fourth century, that it was cited as fact by prominent contemporary Church Fathers, and that it displays the kind of argument used at the time in favor of Alexander's true divinity. One immediate example is a belief in the immortality of Alexander's soul. Many men were seduced by the Devil away from true faith, so Chrysostom says, through the belief in Alexander's divinity and the immortality of his soul. One should probably understand such remarks as directed against the likes of Caracalla, Dio Cassius's mystery man, Julian the Apostate, and anyone who believed their claims. Another such argument in favor of

Alexander's divinity was the greatness of his worldly achievement. This notion should be quite familiar to any reader of this book. Already during his lifetime Alexander strove to fulfill his special destiny through an outstanding display of *arete*. Battles and wars waged and won, nations and cities subdued or conquered, trophies erected—all these were the proof that Alexander's *arete* was indeed sufficient for divinity.

The most important aspect of Chrysostom's discussion is, of course, that it took place at all. The necessity to engage in such discourse substantiates the memetic affinity between Alexander and Jesus, and testifies that this affinity was felt strongly at the time. Another such testimony, much more graphic in nature, appears on the series of commemorative medallions, the so-called contorniates, featuring a variety of Roman emperors, Greek and Roman philosophers and poets, and key figures in Mediterranean polytheistic mythology and religion, mirroring “the longing of parts of the Roman population for a glorious and pagan past.”⁹¹ According to modern interpretation, these medallions were used as a tool in the losing war waged by senatorial Rome against the rise of Christianity in the second half of the fourth and the early fifth centuries c.E. They were probably used as tokens, handed out as presents at New Year's, and are likely to have been connected with the games at the circus.

Tantalizingly, the figure of Alexander is paramount on a great many of the contorniates.⁹² On some of these “coins” Alexander is shown riding on horseback or slaying an enemy with a spear. On others he is displayed with a diademed head. Other images associated with Alexander on the medallions are such Roman symbols as the twin-suckling she-wolf, Aeneas with Anchises and Ascanius, even the Goddess Roma herself. such connections symbolized the bond, by now well established, between the Macedonian King and the Roman Empire. some contorni-ates show scenes of overcoming monstrous adversity: Herakles fighting the Hydra, a Hero defeating a Centaur, Bellerophon slaying the Chimera. We can imagine that these images were meant to convey a hopeful message for the ensuing struggle against Christianity: the Heroes of Greco-Roman mythology have conquered enemies in the past, and will do so again.

Other types show Divinities and Heroes: Helen, the Dioskouroi, Athena, Herakles, Bacchus and a “Mother of the Gods.” Perhaps the most significant figure in this lineup is that of sol Invictus—Invincible sun. Alexander's close connection with the sun has been discussed above. As son of Ammon he was a son of a sun God. As Pharaoh he became an incarnation of Horus—another sun God. In the vision of Plutarch's *De Fortuna* his enlightened world rule was allegorized as the sun, shedding its light of civilization over barbarous nations which

had hitherto lived in darkness. The association of the two Invincibles—Alexander and sol—thus pits them both against Jesus and his own light of salvation.

The most common contorniate image of Alexander, appearing on most of the obverses, depicts him with Herakles' familiar lion scalp. Remarkably, this is the very image chosen by Alexander himself for his own new silver coinage.⁹³ Yet if Alexander's original coinage depicted Herakles himself, merely hinting at his own identification with his ancestral Hero, the contorniates have reversed the order of significance, calling Alexander by his name, and styling him "The Great," "The Macedonian," or both. The image of Alexander as Herakles on the contorniates is thus highly congruent with everything we have seen so far. since both characters were memetically compatible with Jesus—sharing with him such memes as Divine sonship, dual paternity, *apotheosis*, some kind of virgin birth and a world Mission for the benefit of humankind—they were best equipped to compete against Jesus at his own game.

Gods, Heroes and charioteers aside, the most fascinating figure to appear on the reverse of many Alexander contorniates is none other than his mother, Queen Olympias. On these medallions she appears reclining on her bed, fondling the head of a voluptuously coiled snake. The allusion is unmistakable, referring to Alexander's birth from Ammon. This image thus sends a complex message. To begin, it reaffirms the notion of Alexander's Divine sonship through the allusion to his Divine father. Then, it offers a feminine, motherly figure, side by side with her Royal son. This association maybe seen as a counter to the role of Mary as the Mother of God. One may even see on this medallion a manifestation of the triad family—Ammon-Olympias-Alexander—a possible retort to the Christian Trinity. The snake, too, was bound to cause immediate antagonism with any monotheist familiar with either the Old Testament or the New. On this medallion it is evoked also as a symbol of polytheistic resistance.

Given the close memetic affinity of Alexander and Jesus, it is hardly surprising that their figures are found at opposing ends of the political-theological struggles of the fourth and fifth centuries. The very similarities in their memetic nature made them perfect adversaries. On the other hand, the two figures could also be found in close cooperation. such is the case with one fascinating contorniate medallion, now in the Vatican library.⁹⁴ On the obverse we find the usual portrait of the lion-scalped Alexander looking right. On the obverse, however, are two thin concentric rings (such as we find on other contorniates), and in their midst the famous Chi-Rho sign, the very symbol whose appearance convinced Constantine the Great to throw his lot in with Christianity!

Now, it has been argued that the Chi-Rho sign was not originally engraved on the medallion, and is in fact a later addition.⁹⁵ Given the singularity of this combination, the propagandistic agenda of the contorniates in general, and the existence of similar types with Alexander on the obverse and two (empty!) concentric rings on the reverse, the argument sounds quite plausible. Yet it remains undisputed that at some time, some possessor of the coin decided to add the Christogram to the reverse of the Alexander coin. Unfortunately, there is no way to know when and where the Chi-Rho was engraved on the coin. Yet one thing we can say with certainty: this anonymous person found Alexander and Jesus both compatible and complementary.

That any person should entertain such a notion was nothing extraordinary. In another treatise written by John Chrysostom, devoted to the education and illumination of prospective converts to Christianity, he warns against the temptation to use Alexander amulets. It is worth quoting his words in full:⁹⁶

And what is one to say about them who use charms and amulets, and encircle their heads and feet with golden coins of Alexander of Macedon. Are these our hopes, tell me, that after the cross and death of our Master, we should place our hopes of salvation on an image of a Greek king? Dost thou not know what great result the cross has achieved? It has abolished death, has extinguished sin, has made Hades useless, has undone the power of the Devil, and is it not worth trusting for the health of the body?

In this chapter Chrysostom admonishes his audience against retaining various un-Christian types of behavior after their baptism. Omens should not be heeded, incantations shunned (even when they are performed by Christians and couched in Christian terms), and Alexander amulets be cast aside, for they are of no benefit in comparison with Christ's salvation. Yet the very tone of the Doctor of the Church reveals the exasperation he must have felt in trying to convince the populace to forsake their deeply rooted sinful ways. It is quite likely that this remarkable contorniate medallion, featuring both Alexander and the Christogram, represents the very phenomenon described by Chrysostom.

The medallion discussed above testifies to the possibility that Alexander and Jesus could indeed cohabit peacefully. A much more elaborate demonstration of the same principle appears in the anonymous syriac *Christian Legend Concerning Alexander*.⁹⁷ The story begins in Alexandria, in the second (or seventh?) year of Alexander's reign. Wishing to find out the answer to the question of earth, the universe and everything, Alexander sends for all his councilors and ministers to ask their opinions. His intent is to reach the end of the world, and conquer any other king he might find along the way. His

friends warn him that at the end of the world lies a fetid sea, which none can navigate and remain alive. When taken to proof, their wisdom does not fail—the End of the World looks exactly as they said it would.

Bound by the circle of the Earth, Alexander turns his army to the Caucasus region, where he must address the problem of the Huns, latter-day heirs to the skythians. At their head, as usual, stand Gog and Magog. The Huns present a dangerous and frightening threat. When setting out to battle, so it was told, they used to sacrifice a human fetus roasted in its mother's belly. Alexander's response to the threat is one of strategic defense—he builds his famous Gates. Nevertheless, the story is not complete without a full-scale doomsday battle. In it Alexander successfully petitions God with prayer in perfect biblical fashion. The Lord descends from Heaven in the chariot of the seraphim and decides the battle in favor of Alexander and his men. Following Alexander's great success the seers of Tübarlak, king of Persia, cast an all-out augury, which predicts further future victories of Rome led by Alexander, which would create the inevitable world Empire. “That power should stand and rule to the end of time, and should deliver the kingdom of the earth to the Messiah who is to come.”⁹⁸ Clearly, the author was yet completely unaware that Jeremiah's old prophecy, concerning the trouble that would initially come from the North, was about to be turned on its head by the advent of Islam.⁹⁹

For our study, the most intriguing part of the *Christian Legend* comes early in the plot, in the preparation for the first journey. Before setting off Alexander marshals his armies, performs his *proskynesis* and leads them in prayer:

O God, Lord of kings and judges, thou who settest up kings and destroyest their power, I know in my mind that thou hast exalted me above all kings, and thou hast made me horns upon my head, wherewith I might thrust down the kingdoms of the world. Give me power from thy holy heavens that I may receive strength greater than the kingdoms of the world and that I may humble them, and I will magnify thy name, O Lord, for ever, and thy memorial shall be from everlasting to everlasting, and I will write the name of God in the charter of my kingdom, that there may be for Thee a memorial always. And if the Messiah, who is the son of God, comes in my days, I and my troops will worship Him. And if He does not come in my days, when I have gone and conquered kings and seized their lands, I will carry this throne, which is a seat of silver upon which I sit, and will place it in Jerusalem, that, when the Messiah comes from heaven, He may sit upon my kingly throne, for His kingdom is forever.¹⁰⁰

Alexander of the *Christian Legend* is a fascinating character, embodying the historical and theological principles set forth in the last two chapters of this book. To begin, he is portrayed as a defender of

humanity against the ultimate evil of the northern barbarian hordes. His political attitude is distinctly ecumenical. Himself a Macedonian, he rules from Egypt, and uses Persian prophets and seers in order to predict the ultimate victories of imperial Rome. Furthermore, Alexander's acceptance into the fold of Monotheism is complete and wholehearted. The names of the many Gods and Goddesses who had accompanied Alexander *historicus* on his great adventure have all been dropped. His horns, which he gained from his Divine father Ammon, are now ascribed to "God, Lord of kings and judges." This Deity, "who sets up kings and destroys their power," is more reminiscent of the book of *Daniel* and the *Midrash* of Ten Kings than of any Divinity of the polytheistic world.

This God, however, does make one crucial concession to polytheistic mythology—he has a son. This son is not Alexander himself—the *Christian Legend* diplomatically ignores Alexander's birth story. The position of Divine sonship is reserved for the Messiah, whose identity is not disclosed, but is never in any doubt. Like a faithful Monotheist, Alexander is good and ready for the Messiah's immediate coming, but also accepts the possibility of disappointment. One must always hope to witness the Messiah's coming, but also retain belief even if He tarries.¹⁰¹ Yet even in the latter case, Alexander still makes his contribution to prepare His way. A true forerunner of Christ, he builds his Gates to forestall the Enemy at the End of Days, and he plants the Messiah's throne in Jerusalem.

Conclusion

It is the narrowest of corridors, which leads from humanity to Divinity. A precious few have made that transition successfully, and kept their status over time. To judge by modern-day parallels: Michael Jordan is sometimes called “God” for his marvelous athletic skills and leadership qualities. Elvis Presley, a mere King, nonetheless has an active cult in North America with branches worldwide. But how long will basketball and rock ‘n’ roll be played? Will they survive Jesus’ 2000 years (and counting), or even Alexander’s near-millennium in Augila?

This book has covered a wide stretch from the early beginnings of Alexander’s career, to some late and far-flung tellings of his myth. We have seen how the young Macedonian framed his life after the venerable precedents of Greek Myth, which were often, at the same time, his family traditions. Emulating Dionysus, Perseus, Achilles and, not least, Herakles, Alexander lived his life as a character of Myth. To him, I have argued, the distinction between the *spatium historicum* and *spatium mythicum* would have appeared unnatural and strange.

In hindsight the mythologization of Alexander, by himself and by others, appears a natural response to changing circumstances, rather than the result of a well-executed master plan. Alexander may perhaps have suborned the priests of siwah to acknowledge his status as Divine son, but he cannot have planned in advance such circumstances as the discovery of Prometheus’s cave, the strange yet familiar legends told at Aornos, or his special reception as the third Son of Zeus by the Indian kings. The sources are quite clear in their assertion that Alexander’s perception of himself tended more and more towards superhuman status the further east his campaign took him.

Yet it is this very evolutionary process which had such an enormous impact on posterity. Following Alexander’s precedent, one could easily perceive how man became God. The crossing, or rather abolition, of the dividing line between myth and history opened the way for a host of emulators. The most obvious and immediate successors were the various proponents of ruler cult in the Hellenistic world. The example

of seleukos encapsulates Alexander's influence. In the new reality created by Alexander's great adventure it became acceptable, nay necessary, for a prominent individual with Royal aspirations to present himself as the son of a God, and to enjoy honors and cult as one of the Divine.

On the road to Divinity, Alexander led the way by personal example. His precedent not only revealed how a mortal could assume the technical aspects of Divinity—this had long been the tradition of the Pharaohs—but at the same time also demonstrated the crucial contribution of a concomitant mythic cycle. This new understanding proved a powerful weapon, to be wielded in turn by other newcomers to the competitive field of cultic religion in their war against the venerability and prestige of the Gods and Heroes of yore.

But Alexander was much more than a neatly mythologized man-turned-God. He, or at least his figure as perceived by later generations, also offered humankind a positive vision of the future. We have seen in the story of his meeting with the Amazon Queen how Alexander came to be regarded as a harmonizer, an abolisher of the inherent enmity between Greek and Barbarian. His union with the representative of the ultimate “other” also gave rise to new hope: their mixed progeny would incorporate the best qualities on either side. The same attitude is manifest also in Plutarch's *De Fortuna* (329b), where Alexander rejects Aristotle's advice on how to treat the Barbarian, adopting in its stead his own optimistic and universal ideal.

This ideal, if it ever existed fully in his mind, was never realized by Alexander—understandably so, considering his premature death. Yet even this purely historical happenstance was interpreted by Plutarch in a way that is highly reminiscent of Jesus. Like the Galilean Messiah, the Macedonian King's soul was yanked back by the Divinity which had sent it to earth, before the Mission was complete.¹ Like Charles Ross Weede, observers during the early centuries of Christianity will have noted that Alexander and Jesus died at about the same age. That was, of course, coincidence. But in a history devoid of Divine Providence, coincidence becomes a powerful agent.

Alexander's contribution to the formation and development of Christianity goes further still. As is well known, his military and political achievements drew the East into the political sphere of the Mediterranean, thus facilitating the movement of people and ideas. This is the world in which Christianity was born. Remarkably, its holy scripture is written in the Greek *Koine*, the *lingua franca* of the Hellenistic world. But that is not all. Through his myth, Alexander also provided Christianity with a theological framework, including Divine Sonship, dual paternity, and Deification, which helped to strike a delicate balance between the polytheistic and monotheistic worlds.

The inherent difficulties posed by the Jesus myth to any true-hearted monotheist are obvious enough. These three notions, which play such an important role in the Alexander myth, are nearly unpalatable in the context of rabbinic Judaism or mainstream Islam. They are so unpalatable, in fact, that their conceptual problems carried through to the new monotheistic religion, and continued to engage generation after generation of theologians in the attempt to find some explanation to the ultimate paradox: What is the nature of the Son of God, if God Himself is indivisible and intangible? It would be fair to say that up to Luther's Reformation, the question of the nature of God's Son was *the* main theological question, giving rise, or justification, to many a schism.

The myth and history of Alexander helped negotiate this seemingly irreconcilable contradiction. His groundbreaking earthly achievement won him a justified and understandable place in Jewish eschatological thought. His appearance on the stage of world history came to be understood as a vital part of God's plan, the last hurdle to be cleared before the eventual dawn of the Messianic age. Alexander's application of Divine sonship, dual paternity and translation from human to Divine status, combined with his highly positive reception in Jewish circles, at least suggest the possibility that these inherently polytheistic principles might be accepted by adherents of Monotheism.

Thus, Alexander will have served as a bridge between the worlds of mono- and polytheism. As we have seen, Alexander and Jesus were close neighbors in the broiling matrix of Gods, Heroes and Demons, which characterized the religious life of later antiquity. Their myths shared a plethora of essential gross constituent units. While Jews could warm up to such thorny concepts as Divine Sonship through their admiration of Alexander, polytheists could recognize many facets of Alexander in Jesus, and thus become more willing to accept the new player in the game. These similarities will have helped all parties involved to find ways to communicate and cooperate. In the vicious evolutionary struggle which was late-antique syncretism, Alexander and Jesus are found for the most part not in competition, but rather in collaboration.

Both have come off well. Jesus is the figurehead of a world religion, dominating four continents and laying a strong claim to the old center of the monotheistic movement in Jerusalem. Alexander has paid a price for his share of eternity—he must give up his Divine status—but his myth cycle has not only survived, it has increased ten-fold. While this burgeoning may be small consolation for loss of Divinity, Alexander also has a clear advantage in the field of history. A sea of ink has dried up in the attempt to paint a picture of Jesus *historicus*, yet we nevertheless know precious little about him. Not so Alexander.

A final observation regards the fascinating relation of myth and history. When judged according to their actions, rather than by their alleged intentions, Alexander and Jesus cut very different figures. In fact, looked at from the moralist or theological point of view, they could not be further apart. This is certainly the notion expressed in Weede's "Jesus and Alexander" (influenced, no doubt, by the atrocities of his own time). It may thus seem surprising at first sight that a bellicose, not to say bloodthirsty, character like Alexander should end up furthering the cause of a pacifist like Jesus. It is a testimony to the vitality of Myth and to the strange world of memes, that two independent story cycles can communicate and cooperate successfully, without the need to share an ideology.

Perhaps one may even see in the subsequent development of the Alexander myth a process of reverse influence—of Jesus on Alexander. It is a sharp irony of history, at the same time ludicrous and miraculous, that a myth structure erected by the very emblem of war and rage could be transformed into a beacon of proper education, human fraternity and universal harmony. Perhaps it is better after all to relinquish both Aristotle's theory of racial superiority and Plutarch's vision of enlightened imperialism, in favor of Jesus' message to Peter: "Put the sword back in its sheath. Will I not drink the cup given me by my Father?"²

APPENDIX A

Alexander and David

The fourth-century Latin adaptation of Josephus's *Bellum* gives a story about a son of Antiochos of Kommagene, who took part in the siege of Jerusalem under the command of Titus. The young man, more valiant than wise, censured the Roman troops for their lack of enthusiasm in assailing the walls. Titus jokingly invited him to put his own forces to the test, and the young prince accepted the challenge. Not surprisingly, he was repelled by the Jewish defenders, who used their superior position to the utmost advantage. This failure is juxtaposed by the author with Alexander's exploits in the town of the Malloi. In order to storm such strong fortifications successfully without the use of heavy siege engines, one had to possess Alexander's penchant both for fighting and for winning.¹ The author then makes a striking comparison between Alexander's exploits at the town of the Malloi and King David's campaign against the giants, or *Rephaim*.² Happenstance saved Alexander from death, he says, but the prophet David was saved by Grace.³

The story is elaborated in the Medieval Hebrew rendition ascribed to Josippon.⁴ David's part is told in more detail and he is presented as greater than Alexander: "And our King David surpassed him in bravery and valor, for Alexander fought inside the city, while David fought amongst the camp of giants...which is why we know that Alexander was saved by the sins of the city (thus it fell into his hands), while David was saved by the Holy spirit." A second elaboration by the Jewish author makes the juxtaposition of the two Heroes even more relevant. According to his claim, Antiochos's son was in fact a direct descendant of Alexander the Great!

It is hard to say whether Josippon invented this last detail on his own initiative, and if so, for what reason. It appears, however, that the comparison between David and Alexander—highly pertinent to our case—is not as far-fetched as it may seem at first sight. One obvious

similarity is that both Kings were also great conquerors, who carried their national arms far beyond their previous limits. Both achieved unprecedented military successes, and persist to this day as symbols of victory and valor. Their personal prowess manifests itself also in the age-old symbol of Royalty, the slaying of a lion.⁵

Another point of similarity is that both Kings were said to have participated in a physically uneven duel. The mythical account of the *Romance* (A 3.4.1–4), brushing aside the historical tellings of the same event, pits Alexander in man-to-man melee against the Indian King Poros. The encounter is especially striking because of the huge height difference between the two combatants: Poros was 5 cubits high, Alexander 3 cubits short.⁶ This story is highly reminiscent of what may be the most famous episode connected with David's name—his duel with the Philistine giant, Goliath.⁷ The similarity between the two stories goes beyond the big-man vs. small-man motif. In both cases the duel is suggested in order to prevent unnecessary loss of life, and in both cases the smaller man wins by subterfuge (David by the use of a light missile weapon against a vulnerable spot; Alexander by attacking Poros while he was looking back to spot a disturbance in the ranks of his own army).

Another interesting theme shared by Alexander and David concerns pouring out precious water as a demonstration of virtuous leadership. Alexander's story has a number of versions, which put it either during the crossing of the Makran desert, during the chase after Bessos in the arid areas of sogdiana, even in an unspecified desert in Africa.⁸ Be that as it may, Alexander and his men were marching through a waterless landscape, and suffered greatly from thirst. Some soldiers, who managed to find enough water to fill a helmet, brought it to their King. Unwilling to drink the water himself in full sight of his thirsty army, Alexander poured the water to the ground (or, as in Plutarch and Curtius, gave it back to those who had found it). A very similar story is told of David, during what seems to be one of his earliest campaigns against the Philistines (*II Samuel* 23:13–17). Thirsty for water, he dared his men to fetch him some from the wells of Bethlehem, then under Philistine control. But when a bold trio took up the challenge and actually brought him the water, he consecrated it as a libation to Yhwh, unwilling to drink the water for which his brave men had risked their lives.

Another *topos* which connects Alexander and David is Divine sonship. We have seen above how the proponents of Davidic legitimacy tend towards claims to Divine sonship. Such claims come to the fore in the most explicit manner in the mythology of Jesus, where they are naturally combined with the notion of dual paternity. Any readers of *Samuel* and *Kings*, whose theological predilections would

allow them a more literal understanding of these Davidic claims, could easily see the similarity between the biblical Hero and the young Macedonian King.

Finally, both David and Alexander proudly partook of one motif as old as myth itself—male friendship and bonding. David had Jonathan, the able and handsome son of King saul. The friendship between the two exceeded the exigencies of politics and family. The special relationship was not dissolved despite saul's attempts to capture David and kill him off. After the defeat at Mt. Gilbo'a David sang in his famous dirge: "I am sorry for thee, Jonathan my brother, it has been a pleasure. Your love held more wonders for me than the love of women" (II *Samuel* 1:26). After he became King himself, David spared Jonathan's remaining offspring, long after his friend's death. Alexander's special friend was his boyhood pal, Hephaistion. From an early age they were always found side by side, and as the campaign progressed Hephaistion muscled his way also into the ranks of the highest officers. Yet it was for his *philalexandria*—a loyalty not to the idea of the King, but to his person—that he is best remembered. Alexander grieved terribly at his death, and even sent to siwah in order to institute a cult in memory of his departed friend.⁹

Of course, it is hardly my intention to argue that the story cycles of David and Alexander are in anyway connected. The notion of Divine sonship is far too common in antiquity to warrant claims that either figure had somehow influenced the other. so is the *topos* of the lion-slaying King. Even the water-pouring story, considerably more distinct, can hardly be used to postulate a direct link. For Alexander to have emulated David at this point, he would have had to hear the story told or read. And while some Jewish presence in Alexander's camp is certainly not outside the realm of possibility (whatever one may think of Josephus *AJ* 11.339), such hypothetical Jews have left no recognizable trace in the surviving Alexander-histories.¹⁰

It appears, therefore, that the similarities between Alexander and David, such as they are, are purely coincidental. Yet this coincidence could have a significant impact on the minds and hearts of Jews, or Jewish sympathizers, who had to form an opinion about Christianity. The myth of Jesus, as it appears in the Gospels, presents a believing Jew with grave difficulties, not least the notions of Divine sonship and dual paternity. such misgivings could perhaps be alleviated, if one perceived that Alexander bore striking similarities not only to the problematic new Messiah, but also to David, His great predecessor.

APPENDIX B

Sacrifices and Other Religious Matters in the Alexander Histories

ARRIAN

- 1.4.5 After crossing the Danube, sacrifice to Zeus soter, Herakles and Istros (= Danube).
- 1.11.1 Upon return from Thebes, Olympic and musical games; sacrifices to Zeus Olympios.
- 1.11.2 At Elaious, sacrifices to Protesilaos, to ensure a safe crossing to Asia.
- 1.11.6 Sacrifices to Poseidon and the Nereids on the Hellespont.
- 1.11.7 Upon landing in Asia, sacrifices to Zeus *Apobaterios*, Athena and Herakles. Altars erected where Alexander had left Europe, and where he landed in Asia.
- 1.11.7-8 In Troy, sacrifices to Trojan Athena; to Priam on the altar of Zeus *Herkeios*—to avert anger against a descendant of Neoptolemos.
- 1.16.7 After Granikos, dedication to Athena on the Acropolis: “From Alexander s.o. Philippos and the Greeks, bar the Lakedaimonians.”
- 1.17.5 Plans to build a temple to Zeus in the *akra* of Sardis; sudden rain and thunder (in midsummer) point to the palace of the kings of Lydia.
- 1.17.10 Orders to the Ephesians to contribute taxes paid formerly to Persia to the temple of Artemis.
- 1.18.2 Sacrifices to Artemis with military parade.
- 2.3.8 In the night after cutting the Gordian knot there is a thunderstorm; interpreted as a sign that the oracle will come true. sacrifices to the Gods who sent these omens and showed Alexander how to untie the knot.
- 2.5.8 In Soloi, sacrifices to Asklepios, with parade, torch-race, gymnastic and musical games. Considerable delay caused (2.6.4).
- 2.5.9 In Magarsos, sacrifices to local Athena. In Mallos, to the hero Amphilochos. Remission of taxes for the Malloi, since they were originally Argives and thus Alexander's relatives through the Argive Herakleidai.
- 2.15.7 Proclamation of intent to cross over to Tyre and sacrifice to Herakles.
- 2.18.1 Dream of Herakles, inviting Alexander to Tyre; Alexander encouraged by the dream to action.
- 2.24.6 Following the capture of Tyre, sacrifices to Herakles, dedication of a siege engine and a sacred Tyrian ship; parade of the army and navy; gymnastic games; torch-race.
- 2.26.4 Sacrifice before the attack on Gaza. A carnivorous bird drops a stone on Alexander's head; interpreted by Aristandros: the operation will be

successful but Alexander must take care.

3.1.4 In Memphis, sacrifices to the Gods, especially Apis; gymnastic and musical games: the most famous competitors of the day come specially from Greece.

3.1.5 Pothos seizes Alexander to found a city in Egypt. sacrifices are well received. Temples planned for various Greek Gods, but especially Isis.

3.5.2 Sacrifices to Zeus *Basileus*; grand parade, gymnastic and musical games.

3.6.1 Back from Egypt, sacrifices to Herakles at Tyre; gymnastic and musical games.

3.7.6 After crossing the Tigris there is a lunar eclipse (sept. 20, 331); sacrifices to *seleēnē*, *Hēlios* and *Gē*; Aristandros interprets the eclipse as a good sign (cf. 3.15.7).

3.16.4 In Babylon, Alexander orders renovation of the temples destroyed by Xerxes, especially of Bel-Ba'al.

3.16.5 Sacrifices to Babylonian Gods, especially to Bel, according to instructions of the Chaldaei.

3.16.9 In Susa, sacrifices *τῷ πατρίῳ νόμῳ*; torch-race and gymnastics.

3.25. In Zadrakarta, sacrifices to the Gods *ὡς νόμος*; gymnastic games.

3.27. Visit to the Euergetai Ariaspes, reward for their benefits to Cyrus and Cambyses. sacrifices to Apollo.

3.28.4 Foundation of Alexandria in Caucaso; sacrifices *τοῖς θεοῖς ὅσοις αὐτῷ νόμος* *νόμος αὐτῷ*.

4.4.1 Foundation of a city on the Iaxartes; sacrifices to the Gods *τοῖς θεοῖς ὅσοις αὐτῷ*; equestrian and gymnastic games.

4.4.2.6 Omens taken before raid over the Iaxartes against skythians yield negative results. Warnings by Aristandros ignored.

4.8.1 (2) (Leitos affair) sacrifices to the Dioskouroi on the day usually reserved for Dionysos, who is forgotten.

4.22.6 Sacrifices to Athena Nikaia.

4.28.4

4.30.4 Alexander seized by pothos to take the Rock Aornos, motivated by stories of Herakles's failure there. After taking the Rock (30.4), Alexander offers sacrifices (we are not told to whom).

5.3.6 On the Indus, sacrifices *τοῖς θεοῖς ὅσοις αὐτῷ νόμος*; gymnastic and equestrian games. The sacrifices turn out well.

5.8.2 After crossing the Indus. sacrifices *κατὰ νόμον*.

5.8.3 In Taxila, sacrifices *ὅσα οἱ νόμος*; gymnastic and equestrian games.

5.20.1 After the victory over Poros, sacrifices to the Gods *τὰ νομιζόμενα ἐπινίκια* on the bank of the Hydaspes; gymnastic and equestrian games.

5.28.6 On the Hyphasis, sacrifices yield bad omens; (from Ptolemy, who does not mention to which Gods the sacrifices were made).

5.29.1 (2) (At the Hyphasis) In thanks for the Gods who had brought him forth victorious (and as a monument for his own achievements) Alexander raises twelve huge altars, then sacrifices on them, holds gymnastic and equestrian games.

5.29.5 Before crossing the Akesines westward, sacrifices to the River.

6.3.1 Before commencing the sailing to the sea, sacrifices to the Gods as customary and to the Hydaspes as advised by the *manteis*; also to the Akesines and the Indus on which the fleet would sail. Libations poured to Herakles, Ammon, and the other Gods as customary.

6.19.6 On the Indus outlet, sacrifices to the Gods as instructed by Ammon, as Alexander used to say. Next day, on an island opposing the outlet, more sacrifices on instructions from Ammon.

6.19.5 Commentary by Arrian: Alexander wanted to add sailing in the Ocean to the list of his incredible achievements. He therefore threw bulls into the Ocean

and poured libations in honor of Poseidon, to facilitate the sailing of Nearchos.

- 6.28.3 Aristoboulos: in Karmania, sacrifices in thanks for the conquest of India and crossing of the Gedrosian desert; gymnastic and musical games.
- 7.11.8 In Opis: sacrifices to the usual Gods, under supervision of Greek *manteis* and Magi; Alexander prays especially for a successful union of Greeks and Persians in government?
- 7.14.1 In Ekbatana, sacrifices as customary after a success; gymnastic and musical games.
- 7.14.7 Alexander sacrifices to Hephaestion as a hero (some say he asked leave from Ammon to sacrifice to him as a God, but the oracle refused); cf. 7.23.6.
- 7.24.4 sacrifices to the Gods (which?); customary offerings for good luck as well as some others enjoined by some *manteis*.
- 7.25.2 From the Ephemerides: there were prescribed sacrifices for each day, comprising a central part of Alexander's daily routine.
- 7.28.1 Commentary by Arrian: Alexander was "most attentive to the Divine" (τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιμελέστατος).

INDICA

- 18.1.1 Before sailing south Alexander sacrifices to his ancestral Gods, to those pointed to him by *manteis*, and in addition to Poseidon, Amphitrite, the Nereids, Okeanos, Hydaspes, Akasines, Indus. Institutes athletic and musical games.
- 21.2 Nearchos, too, sacrifices to Zeus soter and holds athletic games.
- 36.3 Alexander sacrifices to Zeus soter for the return of the navy, to Herakles, Apollo Alexikakos, Poseidon, and all the Gods of the sea. Holds athletic and musical games, and a procession.
- 36.9 Upon his return to the navy Nearchos again sacrifices to Zeus soter and holds athletic games.
- 42.6 Nearchos sacrifices to the θεοὺς Σωτῆρας and holds athletics games.
- 42.8 In the second reunion of Alexander and Nearchos, Alexander sacrifices as well and holds games.

CURTIUS RUFUS

- 3.7.3 Alexander keeps a vow made during his sickness and holds games in honor of Aesculapius and Minerva despite the imminent war.
- 3.8.2 First action on the morning of Issos, sacrifices to the local Gods.
- 3.12.2 On the bank of the Pinaros (after Issos), altars erected for Jupiter, Hercules and Minerva.
- 4.2.2 Alexander wants to sacrifice to Hercules at Tyre; believes he is a descendant; has received an oracle instructing him so.
- 4.4.1 Alexander orders to kill all Tyrians except for asylum seekers in temples.
- 4.6.10 First action on the morning of the initial attack on Gaza, sacrifices *patrio more*?
- 4.8.1 More sacrifice to Tyrian Herakles.
- 4.13.15 The night before Gaugamela Alexander summons Aristandros and together they sacrifice to Jupiter and Minerva Victoria.
- 5.2.15 Having used Darius's table as a stool, Alexander is ashamed of having insulted the *deos hospitales*.
- 7.9.2 Where many men fell in sogdiana Alexander buries them and sacrifices to their spirits according to Macedonian custom.
- 7.11.1 Prayer to the Gods for the success of the soldiers attacking the Rock.
- 8.2.3 After the surrender of sisimithres, sacrifices to Minerva Victoria.
- 8.11.2 Celebration of the capture of Aornos with sacrifices; altars built to Minerva

Victoria.

- 9.1.1 After the victory over Poros, sacrifices to the sun.
- 9.3.1 At the Hyphasis, Alexander sets up huge altars and overly large equipment and camp, to make future generations think he and his men were giants.
- 9.4.1 After nearly drowning in a river confluence, Alexander erects altars to all present river Gods.
- 9.9.2 On the Ocean banks, sacrifices to the Gods of the sea and the locality.

DIODORUS SICULUS [BOOK 17]

- 16.3 Before setting out from Dion Alexander sacrifices and holds dramatic contests to honor Zeus and the Muses; these last nine days, each day being called after a different Muse.
- 17.3 Visits to the graves of Achilles and Aias with appropriate sacrifices.
- 17.6 Upon leaving the Troad, Alexander sacrifices to Athena and receives favorable omens.
- 18.1 Alexander thanks the Goddess with many offerings; dedicates his armor; takes another set of armor instead, to be worn in the next battle.
- 40.1 After Issos, sacrifices and thank-offerings.
- 40.2 Alexander wishes to sacrifice to Tyrian Herakles.
- 46.6 In Tyre, Alexander releases the statue of Apollo and names it φιλαλέξανδρος, sacrifices to Herakles.
- 72.1 Games and costly sacrifices in Persepolis.
- 86.3 Before crossing the Indus, costly sacrifices to the Gods.
- 89.3 After the victory over Poros, sacrifices to Helios, for allowing the conquest of the Orient.
- 95.1 On the Hyphasis: twelve altars erected to commemorate the limit of the expedition; a camp of giant proportions left behind in order to leave a Heroic impression.
- 97.2 After near drowning Alexander says that, like Achilles, he also vied with a river. sacrifices in thanks to the Gods.
- 100.1 sacrifices in thanks for recovery from the injury received in the town of the Malloi.
- 104.1 Upon reaching the Ocean: rich sacrifices; golden vessels thrown into the sea; altars to Tethys and Okeanos.
- 113.3 Alexander receives the embassies in Babylon by a set order: the first admitted are those coming concerning temples, according to sanctuary prominence: Olympia, Ammon, Delphi, Corinth, Epidauros and others.
- 115.6 Alexander orders sacrifices to Hephaistion as to θεός πάρεδρος. One Philippos arrives with news from Ammon that the God, too, instructs to accept him as a God. Ten thousand animals are sacrificed.
- 116.2 A barbarian captive steals into the palace and puts on the diadem. Alexander very disturbed and angry at the philosophers who made him disregard the wise counsel of the Chaldaioi. Alex sacrifices to the θεοὶς ἀποτροπαίοις to lift the evil omens.

PLUTARCH, *LIFE OF ALEXANDER*

- 15.7 Alexander sacrifices to Athena in Ilion, runs near the grave of Achilles.
- 23.3 On the authority of the Ephemerides, when no military action was pressing, the first concern of Alexander's each morning was sacrifice.
- 25.8 Alexander in a letter to Leonidas: I have sent you much frankincense so you won't have to be parsimonious with the Gods.
- 29.1 Returning from Egypt to Phoenicia, sacrifices; tragic and dithyrambic games of

unprecedented magnitude.

34.1 sacrifices to the Gods in thanks for the victory and kingship of Asia.

41.6-7 During a sickness of Krateros Alexander dreams of a cure; when he wakes up he sacrifices to the Gods and urges Krateros to do the same.

47.12 Alexander swears by Ammon and the rest of the Gods.

50.3-5 Background to the Kleitos affair: everybody is busy with sacrifices; every unusual sign is immediately reported to the *manteis*.

50.7 Alexander was sacrificing to the Dioskouroi when Kleitos arrived at his last banquet.

62.8 Altars erected to the Gods on the Hyphasis, where the locals still sacrifice to this day in Greek fashion.

66.2 sacrifices on some islands in the Ocean.

76.2 According to the Ephemerides, even when Alexander was too sick to do anything else, he got up to sacrifice to the Gods.

76.6 Even on his deathbed, Alexander refuses to neglect his sacrifices and is carried in a litter to perform them.

PLUTARCH, *DE FORTUNA*

343d Alexander sends 10,000 talents to Greece to build temples for the Gods.

JUSTIN / TROGUS

11.5.4-6 Excited at the sight of Asia, Alexander erects twelve altars to the Gods as a war-offering. Before the ships take to the sea, he makes sacrifices to the Gods.

11.5.11 Landing on the Asian shore, more sacrifices and prayers.

11.5.12 sacrifices at the tombs of the Trojan war heroes.

11.10.10 Alexander wishes to sacrifice to Herakles at Tyre.

12.10.4 On the shores of Ocean, sacrifices for a safe return home.

12.10.6 Alexander founds a city and erects an altar at the Indus outlet, to commemorate his deeds.

STRABO

14.5.17 Alexander sacrifices to Amphilochos at soloi because of their common Argive heritage.

APPENDIX C

Alexander Alcoholicus

ARRIAN

- 4.8.2 Drinking has been going on throughout the day of Kleitos's last banquet. Arrian remarks: by that stage Alexander had already adopted barbarian ways of drinking.
- .9.1 According to Arrian Alexander was a slave of two vices: anger and drunkenness.
- 4.10.5 Alexander arranges with some sophists, as well as notable Persians and Medes, to introduce *proskynesis* during a wine-party.
- 4.13.5 Page conspiracy: Most authors say Alexander went on drinking longer than expected and thus was saved. Aristoboulos says he was recalled to the banquet by a syrian woman possessed by some divine power.
- 4.14.2 Hermolaos the conspirator page charges Alexander (among other things) with the drunken murder of Kleitos and, more generally, with his drinking habits.
- 7.14.1 Drinking bouts with the *hetairoi* in Ekbatana.
- 7.14.4 Hephaistion dies of over-drinking.
- 7.24.4 After the evening sacrifices, Alexander drinks with his friends deep into the night.
- 7.25.1 In Babylon: from his own banquet Alexander moves to another, that of Medios. On the next day: another party with Medios.
- 7.29.4 Aristoboulos claims that Alexander drank very little, only for his friends' sake.?

CURTIUS

- 5.7.1 All of Alexander's positive qualities were overshadowed by his predilection for wine.
- 6.2.2 Alexander becomes a hopeless drunk.
- 8.1.2 Long drinking bouts and excessive drinking a common occurrence.
- 8.6.1 Page conspiracy: Alexander was drinking heavily for a long time and thus saved by Fortuna.
- 8.12.1 Alexander maintains self-control in a banquet, remembering the events which led to Kleitos's death.

- 72.1 In Persepolis: the palace is set on fire after everyone had been drinking heavily.
 100.1 Alexander gives a great banquet; the general drunken spirit leads to the confrontation between Koragos and Dioxippos.
 106.1 Emerging out of the Gedrosian desert Alexander holds a Dionysian *komos*, an *en route* drinking party.
 110.7 Ekbatana, Hephaistion dies of over-drinking.
 117.1 Babylon: instead of conducting sacrifice Alexander goes to a *komos* at Medios's quarters, where he contracts his final illness.

PLUTARCH, *LIFE OF ALEXANDER*

- 4.7 Alexander's great body heat made him *ποτικός*—inclined to drink.
 13.4 Alexander is said to have believed that the drunken murder of Kleitos and the revolt in India were revenge by Dionysos for the destruction of Thebes.
 17.9 While in his cups in the town of Phaselis, Alexander crowned the statue of the philosopher Theodektes.
 23.6 Plutarch (probably from Aristoboulos): Alexander drank little himself, but stayed in banquets for the sake of conversation.
 38.1 The Persepolis palace burnt during a banquet.
 50.2 Alexander's drinking and anger are said to have given an excuse to Kleitos's *daimon*.
 50.8 Kleitos's last banquet included heavy drinking, evolving into a fatal drunken brawl.
 67.1 Bacchanal parade through Karmania; stress on heavy drinking.
 67.8 Alexander holds games of singing and dancing and watches them drunk.
 70.1 According to Chares the Eisangeleus, Alexander holds an extravagant drinking competition which ends with a death toll of forty-one.
 72.2 Hephaistion dies of over-drinking.
 75.3 After the mourning period for Hephaistion is over, Alexander once more takes to heavy drinking.
 75.5 After heavy drinking with Medios Alexander becomes terminally ill.
 75.6 Aristoboulos: Alexander did not die of over-drinking.

JUSTIN/TROGUS

- 12.6 Alexander summons his friends to a banquet on a holiday. A drunken argument breaks out over the achievements of Philippos, as compared to those of Alexander.
 12.6 The murder of Kleitos took place *interpocula*.
 12.13 In Babylon Alexander resumes a neglected habit—banquets.
 12.13 Alexander drinks heavily and dies during a drinking bout.
 12.13 Alexander's friends spread the rumor that he had died from overdrinking, but actually there was a conspiracy to poison him.

STRABO

- 7.3.8 According to Ptolemy: Alexander entertained some European skythians
παρὰ πότον.

ATHENAIOS

- 10.43 Philippos, Nikoboule and Menandros on Alexander's excessive drinking habits.
 10.43 On the excessive drinking habits in Macedonian court.
 12.53 Nikkleitos on Alexander's drinking habits.

57a A line from a lost play derides Alexander as a habitual drunk.

124c Alexander said to have been uncomfortable refusing Medios's offer for another party, although heavily drunk already; thus he found his death.

454d Callisthenes in a spiteful remark on Alexander's drinking habits.

623d On Alexander's heavy drinking.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Michael Wood (2001: 8) heard a similar story from the Kalash, or Kefirs, of Nuristan.

2. For a historiographical exposition and explanation of Droysen's position, see Momigliano (1970, 1994), Tarn (1933: 148). Anderson (1932: 3), who, alas, gives no indication where one might find these representations.

3. See, first and foremost, Badian (1958). Also, notably, Bosworth (1988a); Roisman (1995). The Unity of Mankind approach has been completely abandoned in modern scholarship.

4. Such is the position of Thomas (1968) in his response to Badian (1958), a position I accept and follow.

5. Should one put faith in the tantalizing modern myth about Jesus' sojourn in India (before the beginning of the Ministry, after the Crucifixion, or both), one could speculate also on the influence exercised by Alexander's precedent on Jesus' decision to travel specifically to India. However, since it is almost absolutely certain that Jesus the man had never been to India, such speculations seem pointless. For the manifestation of the "Jesus in India" myth, see [chapter 8](#) note 73.

6. So seems to have been Droysen's feeling (Momigliano [1970,1994, p. 152] pagination according to the latter edition). The same attitude is visible also in the syriac *Christian Legend Concerning Alexander*, treated at the very end of [chapter 8](#).

7. 1963; in French 1958.

8. For an introduction to this fascinating and important field see Dawkins (1976/1989: 189–201); Dennett (1995: 335–69); most comprehensively, Blackmore (1999).

9. 1976/1989: 196.

1.SON OF MAN, SON OF GOD

1. Genealogy: Theopompos of Chios = *FGrH* 115 F393; kingship in Argos: Pausanias 2.19.1–2.

2. Herodotus 8. 137–39; *Hellēnodikai*: 5.22.

3. For an organized genealogical table of the Argeads see Borza (1990: xviii).

4. According to Velleius Paterculus (1.6.5) Karanos was eleventh from Herakles, Alexander seventeenth from Karanos. Unfortunately, he does not preserve the list of names. For epigraphic and papyrological evidence of Alexander's Heraklid (and Aiakid) descent see Huttner (1997: 86 n. 1).

5. Alexander and his comrades could and did cite Euripides by heart (Plutarch, *Alex.* 10.6; 51.8 ; 53.2–4 [chapter division throughout this book as Ziegler's Teubner ed. 1968]; Athenaios 12.537d).

6. For the summary of Euripides' lost play, *Archelaos*, see Hyginus (*Fab.* 219), who also explicitly identified Archelaos as a forefather of Alexander the Great. see Harder (1985:123–272) for introduction, *testimonia*, fragments and commentary.

7. Cf. also the genealogy of Leonidas (Herodotus 7.204), clearly exalted above the commanders from the other cities.

8. In his *Philippos*; section numbers below refer to that speech. For Isokrates' considerable influence on both Philippos and Alexander: Aelian *VH* 13.11. Further discussion and bibliography in Huttner (1997: 79–85).

9. 32–33. Nothing is said in this context of Argos, but its Heraklid connections may be taken for granted. Mythical Argos had received Heraklid rulers just as did Sparta (Ephoros *FGrH* 70 F115; Theopompos *FGrH* 115 F393; Nikolaos of Damascus *FGrH* 90 F30; Apollodoros, *Bibl.* 2.8.2–5; Pausanias 2.19.1). see below on the Argive connection between Alexander and Amphilochos. As we saw above, Alexander I was recognized as a Greek from Argos.

10. τὰ παλαιά (33,43).

11. 111–12. Isokrates seems to have overlooked the fact that the myth, even as he told it, undermines his own argument: the success of the first campaign against Troy was due to Herakles' generalship (στρατηγία); not the unity of the Greeks. The opposite is true: he managed with a small force to achieve in a short time what united Hellas took ten years to accomplish.

12. πράξεις (149–51). see also Jones (1999: 36–41) for further uses of the Herakles myth from Alexander I to Philippos II.

13. Diodorus 17.4.1. According to Justin it was the Aiakid connection on his distaff side, going back to Achilles, that Alexander used to convince the Thessalians (11.3.1–2). Either way, the mythical connection is perceived as solid ground on which to conduct diplomatic and political negotiations. Herakles was, of course, the father of Thessalos, the land's eponymous Hero (*Iliad* 2.678). see Huttner (1997: 89), who raises the possibility that Aleuas, too, was a Heraklid.

14. 4.3.23. Translation: Krentz and Wheeler (1994).

15. Hammond (1981: 43–44); Huttner (1997: 88–89).

16. Justin 11.4.5: *Priuata etiam regem superstitione deprecatur geniti apud ipsos Herculis, unde originem gens Aeacidarum trahat.* 'Aeacidarum' is obviously a mistake, attributable with equal probability to Trogus, Justin, or an anonymous hand in the process of transmission. The original may have been 'Alcaïdarum,' cf. Pindar, *Ol.* 6.68.

17. For the date see Bosworth (1980a: 51).

18. Arrian 1.3–4. All citations from Arrian refer to the *Anabasis* unless stated otherwise.

19. For other *loci* in Arrian and modern bibliography, see Brunt (1976–83: I 469–70).

20. Lane Fox (1973: 82–83); Bosworth (1980a: 62); Hammond and Walbank (1988: 36); O'Brien (1992: 49–50).

21. Arrian 5.29.5; 6.3.1; *Ind.* 18.11–12.

22. Nearchos's sacrifices: Arrian, *Ind.* 21.2, 36.9; Alexander sacrifices at the first rendezvous with the navy: 36.3; Nearchos sacrifices to the savior Gods (Θεοῖς τοῖς Σωτῆρσι) at the end of his journey: 42.6; Alexander's unparalleled joy: 35.8.

23. *Phil.* 112.

24. Pindar, *Ol.* 3.43–45; *Isth.* 4.11–13; *Nem.* 3.20–23. Romm (1994: 17–18) with further bibliography.

25. *Ol.* 3.11f.: "whenever for one of them, in fulfillment of Herakles' / ancient mandates, the strict Aitolian judge places above his brows / about his hair the gray-

colored adornment of olive, which once / Amphitryon's son brought from the shady springs of Ister / to be the fairest memorial of the contests of Olympia, / after he persuaded the Hyperborean people, Apollo's servants, with his speech;" (translation: W. H. Race, Loeb 1997, 79–81).

26. Justin 9.2.10–11, with Bosworth (1980a: 62).

27. Bosworth (1980a: 101).

28. Arrian 1.11.7. On Alexander at the Hellespont see Bosworth (1980a: 100–104). This trio of Divinities will come to the fore in the aftermath of Issos.

29. The far-reaching mythical connotations and associations invoked by Alexander at this juncture remain outside the scope of this work. For the classic treatment of this topic see Istinsky (1949).

30. Bosworth (1980a: 101).

31. Diodorus 4.32; the story of Herakles' exploits in Troy is, of course, much older (e.g., Homer, *Il.* 5.638–42; for further *loci* and discussion see scammell [1934]).

32. Arrian 1.11.8. Neoptolemos, Alexander's ancestor on his mother's side, was the young son of Achilles, who distinguished himself during the sack of Troy.

33. Arrian 2.5.9;

ὅτι Ἀργείων μὲν Μαλλωταὶ ἀποικοὶ ἦσαν. αὐτὸς δὲ ἀπ' Ἀργεῶν τῶν Ἡρακλειδῶν εἶναι ἤξιον.

34. For the entire episode see Strabo 14.5.17; Curtius 3.7.2; Arrian 2.5.5–8 with Bosworth (1980a: 195–97).

35. According to *Itin. Alex.* 31 it was at Mallos that Alexander received news of Darius's camp, merely two days' march thence.

36. Lykophron, *Alexandra* 439–46; Strabo 14.5.16; Apollodoros, *Epit.* 6.19 (with Frazer's note *ad loc.* in the Loeb edition, 1921: II 264–67); Tzetzes *On Lykophron* 440–42.

37. Burkert (1992: 52); Scheer (1993: 162–74, 222–71). The picture is further complicated by the fact that the lion's share of the evidence comes from the period after Alexander. It is thus extremely hard to discern which stories were in circulation before his arrival (and in what form), and which are a product of his own arrangements.

38. ὅσα ἥρωι ἐνήγησε (Arrian 2.5.9); ἐναγίσαι (Strabo 14.5.17).

39. The origins of the names "Mopsos" and "Amphilochos" suggest that the former represents ancient Asian tradition, the latter *parvenu* Greek (Burkert 1992: 52). If this is correct, the choices made by either faction in the Mallian *stasis* become that much clearer.

40. Head (1911: 723–24).

41. According to the twelfth-century Byzantine scholar Tzetzes, Mopsos did not die in the duel with Amphilochos, as the story is usually told (Lykophron, *Alexandra* 439–42; Strabo 14.5.16), but rather was slain by Herakles (On *Lykophron* 980)! If the mythical Herakles may stand for the historical Alexander, his slaying of Mopsos would then represent Alexander's decision in favor of Amphilochos.

42. One imagines that the "Mopsians" would have told a different story. Yet they, too, surely enjoyed the remission of taxes. If one is to trust *Itin. Alex.* 42, some Mallotai participated in the siege of Tyre.

43. Witness Alexander's mood and pretensions in the famous literary exchange with Darius (for *loci*, discussion and modern bibliography see Bosworth 1980a: 227–33).

44. I tend to agree with those scholars who argue that the new coinage was inaugurated shortly after Issos: Zervos (1982); de Callataÿ (1982); Troxell (1991);

Arnold-Biucchi (2006: 33). *Contra* Price (1982; also 1993); Mørkholm (1991: 42–45); Fredricksmeyer (2000: 144 n. 18). Should the earlier date turn out to be the correct one, my argument would require some modification; however, my view of the essential role played by Herakles would, I believe, remain the same.

45. Mørkholm (1991: 42–43); Arnold-Biucchi (2006: 35).

46. Curtius 3.12.27.

47. For description and plates see Mørkholm (1991: 42, plates 7–11); Arnold-Biucchi (2006: 51–56, plates 7–12). A fourth figure, appearing on the reverse of Alexander's gold pieces, was Nike. This Divinity, lacking a mythology of her own, was closely identified with Athena. Cf. Curtius 4.13.15, 8.2.32, 8.11.24; Arrian 4.22.6, where Alexander sacrifices to Athena Nikaia, *alias* Minerva Victoria.

48. The *locus classicus* is *Iliad* 8.362–65. Nike, too, is a natural companion of Herakles, the ultimate winner both in war and in sports.

49. Zervos (1979; 1982); Troxell (1991).

50. Cf. already Zervos (1982: 174).

51. Zervos (1982: plates 43.1–3).

52. *BMC Lycaonia, Isauria & Cilicia* = Hill (1900: 166, *No* 22 plate xxix.6; 177 *No* 91 plate xxxii.11). For the Macedonian Herakles tradition see Seltman (1950: 67).

53. Stewart (1993: 161) takes this notion a step further, stating that Alexander's coins “symbolized his omnipotence, omnipresence, and wholehearted support from Olympos...after 325 it announced that his empire was nothing less than the earthly counterpart of the kingdom of the gods...presided over by a king who combined the roles of the all-knowing Zeus and his invincible enforcer Herakles, of father and sibling together.”

54. Mørkholm (1991: plate 11): ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ.

55. For this reading of the legend on Alexander's coins see Stewart (1993: 160–61).

56. Not completely unheard of, but certainly a less obvious choice for his representation. For Alexander's beardlessness and the tradition of a beardless Herakles see Stewart (1993: 74–75).

57. The question of the “crypto-portrait” will be discussed further in [chapter 4](#).

58. Arados: Arrian 2.13.7–8; *Itin. Alex.* 38. Byblos: Curtius 4.1.15; Arrian 2.15.6. Sidon: Curtius 4.1.15–26; Arrian 2.15.6. see also Diodorus 17.40.2; Curtius 4.2.1; Justin 11.10.6.

59. Curtius 4.2.2; Arrian 2.15.6–7; Justin 11.10.10.

60. Diodorus 17.40.2; Curtius 4.2.2–7 (the most detailed account); Arrian 2.15.7, 16.78; Justin 11.10.10–11; *Itin. Alex.* 42.

61. For a detailed answer see Amitay (2008).

62. Diodorus conveniently omits this detail, as well as the golden crown and the promise to follow Alexander's orders.

63. E.g., Tarn (1948: I 37); Lane Fox (1973:181); Bosworth (1980a: 235); O'Brien (1992: 82); Hammond (1997: 92); Heckel and Yardley (1997: 146).

64. Curtius 4.2.3. Justin 11.10.10 mentions an oath Alexander had taken in that regard.

65. For the identification of the two divinities see the bibliography in Amitay (2008: 97 and note 32).

66. Pausanias 10.4.6; Frazer (in Jones' Loeb edition of Pausanias, *ad loc.* = vol. IV 387); Lipiński (1970: 56)—the classic treatment of the *Egersis* festival; Aubert (2001:154,276); Amitay (2008: 96–99).

67. Thus arousing the wrath of the monotheistic prophet Ezekiel (28:1–10). For the title see the inscription from 'Amman-Philadelphia, published by Abel (1908:

570-73, 77-78). The *ἑγερσείτης* was usually a person of note, often the monarch himself or a close relation: Justin 18.4.5; Lipiński (1970: 56-58); Bonnet (1983: 206-7); Elayi (1986: 249-61); Aubet (2001: 142-58); Amitay (2008: 98, notes 39, 41).

68. Lipiński (1970: 48). For possible connections of the Greek Herakles with this custom see Farnell (1921: 165-66).

69. This question will be considered in [chapter 4](#).

70. If the interpretation of Alexander's new coinage is accepted, and if some coins had already reached Tyre by this stage, they will have given the Tyrians even more cause for alarm.

71. 4.2.5: non tenuit iram cuius alioqui potens non erat.

72. Contra ius gentium, Curtius 4.2.15.

73. Curtius 4.2.16-17; Plutarch, *Alex.* 24.5; Arrian 2.18.1.

74. So, explicitly, Curtius 4.2.17.

75. Aristandros's book is mentioned in the *Oneirokritika* of Artemidoros of Daldis (1.31; 4.23), a mid/late-second-century C.E. writer from Asia Minor. His work, a collection of dreams and their interpretations, tells of yet another dream of Alexander during the siege of Tyre. This last dream, involving an elusive satyr and reinforcing the message of the Herakles dream, is also reported by Artemidoros (4.24; cf. Plutarch, *Alex.* 24.8-9). Hughes (1984: 169-170, 172) suggests plausibly that the reports of both dreams derive from Aristandros. For Aristandros and his reputation in antiquity see Nice (2005).

76. One finds a clear example of this misleading attitude in Diodorus 17.41.7-78. He prefaces his report of the strange signs which had occurred to the Macedonians and the Tyrians thus: "and there were other astonishing signs, with the power to instill confusion and terror among the multitude." Why suppose that the multitude was more susceptible to superstition (*δεισιδαιμονία*, §6), than nobles and generals? In fact, Diodorus's own account at §7-8 shows that in Tyre it was the magistrates who attached greater importance to the reported dream about the desertion of Apollo, while some hot-headed youngbloods intended to stone the dreamer, suspecting him of collaboration with Alexander.

Incidentally, Welles's (Loeb) translation of Diodorus's passage (§7) takes this stance a step further: he renders *δυνάμενα* as "calculated," thus implying that these astonishing signs were in some way fabricated.

77. *Καὶ τὶ καὶ θεῖον* 2.18.1.

78. Pausanias 6.18.2-4. The story comes, in all likelihood, from Anaximenes himself, who wrote a history of ancient Greece down to Alexander's (and his own) time.

79. See the seminal article by Edmunds (1971). That religion played a crucial part in Alexander's life is now generally accepted: O'Brien (1992, ix); Bosworth (1996: 132); Hammond (1997: 201); Fredricksmeyer (2003), with discussion and further literature; Cartledge (2004: 237).

80. Arrian 7.25.2-6. The question of the authenticity of the *Ephemerides* is beyond the scope of this work. suffice it to say that even if a forgery, they would still have to be realistic in order to convince their purported readership. Thus, the information about the daily sacrifice is bound to reflect faithfully the day-to-day routine at Alexander's court.

81. Diodorus 17.46.6; Arrian 2.24.6. Interestingly, Arrian took the time to mention the existence of the inscription, yet judged its contents unworthy of record. We should dearly like to know how Alexander himself had summed up his Tyrian experience.

82. Diodorus 17.46.4; Curtius 4.4.16-17; Arrian 2.24.4. Cf. Justin 18.3.18.

83. Arrian 2.24.2–5; Curtius 4.4.12–15; *Itin. Alex.* 42. Curtius extends the asylum to all temples; cf. however the vicious fate of those who made their last stand at the precinct of Agenor (Arrian, *ibid.* §2).

84. As we have seen above, the notables and royal family were more willing than their citizens to reach an accommodation. This former goodwill may have served them well at the city's fall.

85. The sources for the entire episode are: Kallisthenes in Strabo 17.1.43 (= *FGH* 124 F14a); Diodorus 17.49–51; Curtius 4.7.5–32; Plutarch, *Alex.* 26.11–28.1; Arrian 3.3–4; *Itin. Alex.* 50–53; Justin 11.11. Modern bibliography is extensive. For surveys see: seibert (1972: 116–25); Brunt (1976–83: I 467–80); Bosworth (1977: 51–75) and (1980a: 269–74).

86. Kallisthenes' work has perished. The statement is derived from Strabo 17.1.43:

Καλλισθένης φησὶ τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον φιλοδοξῆσαι μάλιστα ἀνελθεῖν ἐπὶ τὸ χρηστήριον ἐπειδὴ καὶ Περσέα ἤκουσε πρότερον ἀναβῆναι καὶ Ἡρακλέα.

87. According to Huttner (1997: 105), who stresses Alexander's actions as a continuous and conscious attempt to emulate Herakles, Kallisthenes and others will have heard this reasoning from Alexander himself.

88. **Φιλοτιμία** —3.3.2. For the genealogical connections between the three see Bosworth (1980a: 270).

89. 3.3.1–2.
καὶ τι καὶ αὐτὸς τῆς γενέσεως τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ἐξ Ἀμμωνα ἀνέφερε, καθάπερ οἱ μῦθοι τὴν [ν.λ. τῆς] Ἡρακλέους τε καὶ Περσέως ἐς Δία with Bosworth (1980a: 270–71) for modern scholarship on this passage.

90. We cannot know, of course, whether both Ptolemy and Aristoboulos gave Heroemulation as a cause for the visit. Ptolemy, on at least one point, diverged from the more prevalent narrative **ὁ πλείων λόγος** Arrian 3.3.6), in the story of the “divine” help rendered along the way: he mentioned two serpents (3.3.5), whereas Kallisthenes (Strabo 17.1.43) and Aristoboulos (Arrian 3.3.6) mentioned two ravens. On the point of Hero-emulation we get no such notice.

91. Arrian, at least, seems to have thought that the visits were indeed a part of the myth already known to Alexander. In his narrative they form a part of the general opinion (in indirect speech, **ἐλέγετο**) about the reliability of the oracle. The immediate sense is that this was known to Alexander. According to Huttner (1997: 105) the story of Herakles' visit to Ammon's oracle was made up in Alexander's own time. If, indeed, an addition by Kallisthenes, it hit the mark.

92. Through Perses, his son from Andromeda (Herodotus 7.61).

93. Messenger from Xerxes: Herodotus 7.150–51. Persian Perseid: 7.220.4.

94. Cf. Bosworth (1977: 68).

95. Georges (1994: 77).

96. Herodotus 2.43.

97. For a detailed treatment of the myth, with *loci* and bibliography, see Vasunia (2001: 183 ff.).

98. Pindar, *Ol.* 3.11 ff.

99. On Herakles as agent of colonization and civilization, see Malkin (1994: 184, 203, 207).

100. Incidentally, Herakles' hatred of and war against the “race of wild beasts and unlawful men” (**τὸ γένος τῶν ἀγρίων θηρίων καὶ παρανόμων ἀνδρῶν** [Diodorus 4.17.5]) is mirrored in Alexander's own sentiments towards some men among his troops, who had seduced the wives of their comrades: their behavior was not to be

tolerated, and, if convicted, they were to be treated like wild beasts intent on destroying the human race (ὡς θηρία ἐπὶ καταφθορᾷ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γεγονότα [in a letter to Parmenion, Plutarch Alex. 22.4]).

101. 5.41–48. Cf. Diod. 4.23.3; Paus. 3.16.4–5.

102.

Φὰς τὴν Ἑρῦκος χώρην πᾶσαν εἶναι Ἡρακλειδέων αὐτοῦ Ἡρακλέος κτησαμένους; 5.43.

103. Diodorus 4.23.2–3; Apollodoros *Bibl.* 2.5.10.

104. Diodorus is, of course, later than Alexander. What sources he used for the colonizing role of Herakles in the Antaios myth we do not know. still, there is no reason to suppose that it was influenced by later Alexander-traditions. The most obvious sign of Alexander-influence would be mention of Herakles' visit to siwah, which is missing. Allusion to the Eryx story is also missing from the narrative of Alexander's own visit to siwah. One can conclude, therefore, that the tradition represented by Diodorus is independent of the Alexander-histories. Another example of this phenomenon will be discussed in [chapter 4](#).

105. The identification of Ammon with Zeus cannot be doubted. Pindar, whose house in (Greek) Thebes was spared by Alexander, called the God Zeus Ammon (Διὸς Ἀμμωνος [*Pyth.* 4.16]). Herodotus, too, is clear on the issue, stating that Ammon is the name of Zeus among the Egyptians (2.42). On Alexander's familiarity with Herodotus's Egyptian narrative, see Vasunia (2001: 256f.). Arrian's use of the God's two names points to the particular manifestation of Alexander's divine father.

106. Curtius 4.7.8; Arrian 3.3.2; Justin 11.11.2–6.

107. Attempts have been made to interpret Attalos's remark as directed against Olympias's non-Macedonian origins: Badian (1963: 244); Hamilton (1969: 24). However, it seems unlikely that such an argument could be made in the presence of Philippos, whose Macedonian credentials also left something to be desired: Plutarch, *Mor.* 14b; Libanius, *Arg. Orat. Demos.* 18 (= Foerster's Teubner ed., 1915: 606); Suidas, s.v. **Κάρανος**; Ellis (1976: 215, 250–51 n. 98); Carney (1987: 44 n. 27).

108. Plutarch, *Alex.* 9.6–11, where Attalos is Kleopatra's uncle. According to Diodorus 17.2.3 he was her brother. The story is told in greater detail in the *Romance* (A 1.20–21). This version agrees with Diodorus on the familial relation of Attalos and Kleopatra. It also puts Olympias at the banquet, and puts the taunts against Alexander in the mouth of one Lysias, a court jester.

109. Plutarch, *Alex.* 3.3–4.

110. *Alex.* 3.4.

111. See also Bosworth (1977: 70–75), who argues convincingly that the question of Divine sonship was very much on Alexander's mind even before his visit to Siwah; further-more, he did not keep his thoughts on the matter a secret.

112. Burstein (1991); accepted by Stewart (1993: 174 n. 64); Badian (1996: 14). *Contra* van Voss (1993: 71–72); Hammond (1997: 99); Fredricksmeyer (2000: 145–46); Cartledge (2004: 150); Stoneman (2008: 8). Of the works which have appeared before Burstein's influential article one should note Eddy (1961: 280), who suggested that the story of Alexander and Nektanebo originated in priestly circles in Ptolemaic Egypt, with the purpose of legitimizing Macedonian rule. such interest of early Demotic literature (possibly c. 250 B.c.) in the legend of Alexander and Nektanebo has been demonstrated by Jasnow (1997).

113. Burstein (1991:145). Stewart (1993:178) expresses a similar sentiment. A Pharaonic coronation at Memphis became standard procedure with the Ptolemies, at least from the time of Ptolemy V Epiphanes (crowned 204 B.c.), possibly earlier; Thompson (1988: 139).

114. For the papyrus and inscriptions see Gauthier (1916: iv 200–201). By recognizing him as Pharaoh, and awarding him official royal titles, the local priesthood also identified Alexander as the earthly manifestation of Horus, emblem of Kingship and one of the most venerable members of the Egyptian pantheon. More on Alexander and Horus in [chapters 4](#) and [8](#).

115. Cf. Philostratos, *Vit.Ap.* 2.43, in whose fantastic account Alexander's altars at the Hyphasis were dedicated, first and foremost, to “father Ammon and brother Herakles.” See also Huttner (1997: 95).

116. According to an alternative reading by Stewart (1993: 160), “Zeus could be understood as Alexander's special protector, ‘Zeus Alexandreios.’”

117. Not so, of course, in Egyptian history, where every Pharaoh was also conceived as a son of Ammon (Kemp 1989: 198). For further discussion of Egyptian Divine sonship see [chapters 4](#), [6](#), [8](#).

118. Diodorus 17.51.2; Curtius 4.7.26; Plutarch, *Alex.* 27.6; Justin 11.11.10.

2. IN THE FOOT STEPS OF HERAKLES

1. Diodorus 17.82; Curtius 7.3.6–18; Arrian 3.28.9. See also the vivid firsthand testimony of Wood (2001: 142–45).

2. Strabo 11.5.5, 15.1.8; Diodorus 17.83.1; Curtius 7.3.22; Arrian: 5.3.1–4; *Ind.* 5.11. Strabo and Arrian (who reports the incident out of context) quote Eratosthenes of Kyrene; see Bosworth (1995: 213–19).

3. σπῆλαιον λέγει ἰδόντας ἐν Παραπαμισάδαϊ τοὺς Μακεδόνας καὶ τινα μῦθον ἐπιχώριον ἀκούσαντας ἧ καὶ αὐτοὺς ξυνθέντας φημίσαι (Arrian 5.3.2). Eratosthenes' cynical rationalism has left its mark on modern scholarship: O'Brien (1992:129); Bosworth (1995: 216) and (1996: 118).

4. Strabo 11.5.5: οἱ κολακεῖας μᾶλλον ἢ ἀληθείας φροντίζοντες.

5. Translation by H. L. Jones (Loeb).

6. Bosworth (1995: 216).

7. That Eratosthenes thought so is clear from Strabo's rhetoric: the flatterers were motivated by their wish to please Alexander, which made them disregard the truth. Hence they knew that the Caucasus was actually somewhere else (Greeks had been familiar with the location of the “real” Caucasus for centuries before Alexander), but decided to overlook the fact.

8. 4.15.1–6. see Bosworth (1995: 104–6).

9. ὑπ' αὐτὰς τὰς ἄρκτους (Diodorus 17.82.2); *gelidissimum septentrionis axem spectant* (Curtius 7.3.7).

10. 7.4.26–27; See also 7.6.12, where Alexander, then in Sogdiana, sends Derdas on a mission to the Skythians residing north of the Bosphorus (*qui super Bosphorum colunt*), where the area beyond the Danube supposedly neighbors Baktria; see also 8.1.7, where the return of Derdas has done little to correct geographical misconceptions.

11. For an interesting reconstruction of Alexander's geographical perceptions with the help of the *Tabula Peutingeriana* and the Hereford Cathedral *Mappa Mundi* see Stoneman (1994: 99–102), with earlier bibliography on the major geographical questions.

12. Herzfeld (1968: 336–37); Bosworth (1995: 216). The name of the mountain—Paropamisos—which means “summit too high for the saena,” encourages this identification.

13. Boyce (1975: 88–89).
14. For various parallels between the two birds, which do not concern us here, see Jussi (1976).
15. Myth of Ninurta: Cooper (1978), with Van der Toorn and VanderHoorst (1990:1011); Annus (2002). For the Anzu myth in various manifestations see *ANET* 113–18.
16. Goukowsky (1976: 237); Bosworth (1995: 216).
17. On this fascinating divinity see Duchesne-Guillemin (1973: 125–27); Boyce (1975/1991: I 62–65, 268; II 40–41, 272; III 62–65); Gnoli and Jamzadeh in *El s.v. Bahram*.
18. Cf. Dodds (1973: 154) on similar functions of Herakles.
19. See, for example, the famous inscription of Antiochus of Kommagene (*OGIS* 383, lines 55–56; English translation: Burstein (1985, No. 48).
20. Benveniste (1957: 193–94).
21. For details see Legge (1965:1–8); Beal (1995: xiii ff.); Fraser (1996: appendix 3,227–34).
22. Translation by Beal (1995: lix); cf. Legge (1965: 82–83).
23. Beal (1995: II 154). What traces might we expect a thousand-year-old bird to leave on bare rock?
24. Goukowsky (1976: 237), adding a layer of his own to the myth, moved the Buddhist version from the heart of the Magdha region in the Ganges valley to the mountains of Gandhara in western India, thus completing the identification of the two myths. Unfortunately, the place of the incident in Fa-Hian's narrative, as well as the location of *Grīdhrakūṭa* (Cunningham 1871: 393–34) render his conflation impossible.
25. Even without invoking *interpretatio Graeca*, the process of calling unfamiliar terrain by familiar names is a natural one. One recalls Mark Twain's personal experience while traveling far away from home, as described in the second volume of *The Innocents Abroad*: "We are camped near Temnin-el-Foka—a name which the boys have simplified a good deal, for the sake of convenience in spelling. They call it Jacksonville. It sounds a little strangely, here in the Valley of Lebanon, but it has the merit of being easier to remember than the Arabic name" (chapter XLII); (then, in chapter XLV): "Three or four hours out from Damascus we passed the spot where Saul was so abruptly converted, and from this place we looked back over the scorching desert, and had our last glimpse of beautiful Damascus, decked in its robes of shining green. After nightfall we reached our tents, just outside of the nasty Arab village of Jonesborough. Of course the real name of the place is El something or other, but the boys still refuse to recognize the Arab names or try to pronounce them. When I say that that village is of the usual style, I mean to insinuate that all Syrian villages within fifty miles of Damascus are alike—so much alike that it would require more than human intelligence to tell wherein one differed from another." Cf. Strabo 11.11.5, who, on the authority of Aristoboulos, describes how the Macedonians went through the very same process as Twain's 'boys.' This process is all too familiar to anyone who has ever visited with compatriots a terrain and culture very different from his or her own.
- A similar conclusion about giving the name of Caucasus to the Hindu Kush, though without reference to the Chinese monks, has been reached by Herzfeld (1968: 337) and Lane Fox (1973: 296).
26. Malkin (1994: 181).
27. Chapter 1, p. 23.
28. Strabo 11.5.5—ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐσχάτοις τῆς γῆς ἐν τῷ Καυκάσῳ.
29. Arrian 4.4; Curtius 7.7.1–7.9.16.
30. Darius: Arrian 4.4.3. Bosworth (1995: 28) is surely right in saying that "there

is every reason to believe that...Cyrus' defeat in 530...was constantly in Alexander's mind." Cyrus's fatal misadventure is alluded to in Kallisthenes' speech at 4.11.9. More on Cyrus below.

31. Curtius 7.9.15. According to the *Metz Epitome* (12) the pursuing Macedonians had reached the pillar of Pater Liber: eos Macedones per noctem sequentes usque ad Liberi Patris columnam prevenisse dicuntur.

32. For example, saying that the sick, disappointed Alexander was "mollified by devout courtiers who calculated that during the chase their king had passed beyond the northeastern limits reached by the God Dionysos" (O'Brien 1992: 131).

33. *Hist. Pl.* 4.4.1.

34. *Bacch.* 15–16. For the argument that these lines are a later interpolation see bibliography in Bosworth (1996: 120, with notes 102, 106). The argument defies belief. It compels us to assume that one interpolated text dominates our entire Ms. tradition, and that this was the same text Strabo had before him (he cites lines 13 ff. in 15.1.7). All that with a playwright as popular as Euripides, whose works many knew by heart (cf. the scene in Plutarch *Nik.* 29, as famous as it is moving, telling how the Athenian marines in Sicily were spared destruction because they could recite Euripides, to the delight of their Syracusan captors). As we have seen, Alexander and his comrades, too, could and did cite Euripides (Plutarch, *Alex.* 10.6; 51.8; 53.2–4; Athenaios 12.537d).

35. Strabo (3.5.6) tells us that the Macedonians believed to be *stelai* "those places only in which they found some sign of the stories told about Dionysos or of those about Herakles." This was one such place.

36. *NH* 6.49.

37. Demodamas is connected with Nikator and his son in *OGIS* 213, an inscription from Didyma. See also Schwartz, *RE* s.v. 'Demodamas'; Robert (1984); Grainger (1990:154,164).

38. Notably, in Alexander's case the limit was assigned to Dionysos alone. The addition of Herakles, Semiramis and Cyrus, surely on the initiative of Demodamas or someone close to him, demonstrates admirably the process of myth development. More cases where Alexander contributes new chapters to the mythology of Herakles will be discussed in [chapter 4](#).

39. The author of the *Marmor Parium*, who gives little detail of Alexander's career in the East (the three main victories over the Persian army; mastery over Cyprus, the Levant and Egypt; capture of Babylon; capture of Darius and slaying of Bessos) took care to note that in the archonship of Euthykritos in Athens "A Hellenic city was founded on the Tanais" (ωἰκίσθη δὲ πρὸς τῷ Τανάϊ πόλις Ἑλληνίς). The impression made by the foundation of a Greek city at the end of the world was immense; it was one of a precious few of Alexander's achievements that the Parian chronicler chose to commit to posterity.

40. Arrian 4.7.3; Curtius 7.5.40. see Bosworth (1995: 44) for details and precedents.

41. Ἡρακλῆς Πινυκολούστης, 9.25.4; cf. Diodorus 4.10.3.

42. 7.10.13–14; *rexque ipse credi voluit deum donum id fuisse*. 'deum' appears only in interpolated Mss., yet it seems a good interpolation; otherwise, it is hard to see whose gift that would be. The general gist of Arrian (4.15.8) and Plutarch (*Alex.* 57.8) lends it further support.

43. In Arrian 4.15.8 there are two wells, one of oil, the other of water. Bosworth (1995: 111) conjectures that Arrian conflated two stories. All three authors agree on the location of the incident, which was reported by Alexander in a letter to Antipatros (Plutarch, *Alex.* 57.8; Athenaios, 2.42 f).

44. Prophecy at Tyre: 2.18.1. Note also the similarity in language:

ξὺν πόνῳ (Tyre); πόνων (Tyre): σημεῖον, ἐπὶ τοῖς πόνοις (Oxus) and cf. Plutarch, *Alex.* 57.9: ἐπιπόνου, πόνων ἀρωγὴν.

45. Plutarch *Mor.* 776e.

46. Ibykos: scholiast on Aristophanes' *Clouds*, 1051, in: *Greek Lyric*, edited and translated by D. A. Campbell (Loeb 1991, vol. III); my emphasis. Thermopylai: Herodotus 7.176.3. Cf. also the warm springs connected with Herakles in Euboea, mentioned by Strabo 9.4.2.

47. 8.5.8 ff.; more below.

48. Alexander seems to have had a special interest in sicilian history. The special shipment of reading materials sent by Harpalos to Alexander, already in the heart of Asia, included the books of Philistos—the famous historian of sicily. This was the only piece of prose in the entire shipment (Plutarch, *Alex.* 8.3; Holt [2003: 158 n. 54]).

49. Curtius 8.1.11 ff.; Diodorus, contents to book 17, §35.

50. Diodorus 4.17.3–5; trans. C. H. Oldfather, Loeb.

51. Herodotus 7.125–26.

52. Where Pausanias (6.5.4–7) found them.

53. Plutarch *Demet.* 27.6; Pausanias 1.9.5.

54. Ael. *VH.* 12.39.

55. Dio Cassius 73.14.1–3; *Historia Augusta, Commodus* 8.

56. One more incident which occurred during the march into India (327/6) can be mentioned here: an Indian nation in what is today north Pakistan offered resistance to Alexander and was defeated. Many men fell captive, as well as huge herds of cattle. Alexander was impressed by the beauty and size of the latter, selected the finest and sent them to his homeland. Herakles, too, underwent many of his adventures while importing fine cattle to Greece.

57. In Arrian's narrative (4.8.1–3). Curtius, Plutarch and Justin make no mention of Herakles in this context. The account of Diodorus is lost. Arrian is surely drawing here on the history of Ptolemy. Aristoboulos, characteristically defensive of Alexander, neglected to relate how the trouble started (Ἀριστόβουλος δὲ ὅθεν μὲν ἡ παροιμία ὠρμήθη οὐ λέγει; 4.8.9).

58. 4.8.4: οὐκ ἔαν ἐς τὸ θεῖον ὑβρίζειν.

59. Curtius 8.1.23 ff.; Plutarch *Alex.* 50.1–9.

60. Plutarch also gives an alternative name—Pierion—for this otherwise unknown poet. It thus appears that Plutarch (or his source) used at least two accounts, which gave basically the same story; the main difference will have been the poet's name.

61. Arrian 4.8.9; Curtius 8.1.45, 48.

62. Curtius 8.2.1–11; Plutarch, *Alex.* 51.11–52.1; Arrian 4.9.2–5, Justin 12.6.7–8.

63. Diodorus 3.67.2; Apollodoros, *Bibl.* 2.4.9. Herakles was also connected with chance slayings, when in his cups, of the wine-pourer (Pausanias 2.13.8; Athenaios 9.410f–411a).

64. *Herakles*, or *Hercules Furens* in the older editions. The edition and translation used here are those of D. Kovacs (Loeb 1998). The relevant lines are 822 *ad fin.* It is to this play that all references are made in this context.

65. According to the unknown writer Nikoboule, Alexander once acted out from memory an *episodion* from Euripides' *Andromeda* (Athenaios, 12.537d). Nothing is known of Nikoboule. she is quoted twice by Athenaios (also in 10.434c), both in the context of Alexander's last dinner party. Laqueur (*RE*, s.v.) conjectures that her name may be a pseudonym. Cf. *FGrH* II 127.

66. For Herakles, ll. 1146f., 1301; for Alexander's attempted suicide: Plutarch

Alex. 51.11; Curtius 8.2.4; Arrian 4.9.2; even Justin, 12.6.7–8, generally hostile to Alexander, recognized his remorse and noted his immediate attempt to end his life.

67. Herakles: 1199 ff., covering himself with his cloak and refusing to see Theseus, who had luckily arrived in the nick of time. Alexander: Plutarch *Alex.* 52.1; Curtius 8.2.11; Arrian 4.9.3; Justin 12.6.15.

68. Diodorus's table of contents, book 17 §36 (where the entry is: "concerning the offense against Dionysos and the killing of Kleitos in the banquet"); Curtius 8.2.6; and especially Arrian 4.9.5, who makes this the prime factor in the consolation of Alexander.

69. 889 f.; 1122. Euripides also assigns blame to Hera (1311 f.) and gives Theseus a similar part to "some of the prophets" in Arrian's account (4.9.5); cf. 1392–93, where Herakles already accepts Theseus's explanation of the disaster.

70. 4.9.2; 7.29.1; and especially 7.30.3, the sentence before last in Arrian's *Anabasis*: ἀλλὰ αὐτόν γε Ἀλέξανδρον οὐκ αἰσχύνομαι θαυμάζων— but I am not ashamed to admire Alexander himself (unlike some of his deeds that have been censured).

71. Another indication that the identification of Alexander with Herakles was very much on the minds of people at court is suggested by the following episode in Arrian (4.10.3–4): the court historian Kallisthenes had told Philotas that the people held in the greatest honor among the Athenians were Harmodios and Aristogeiton—the tyrannicides. When Philotas asked where in Greece a tyrannicide could find refuge, Kallisthenes recommended asylum be sought among the Athenians, "for they fought even against Eurystheus on behalf of the children of Herakles, when he was then a tyrant over Hellas" (§4). The allusions are clear: the tyrant is Alexander; Philotas, about whom treasonous rumors were rife—indeed he was tried, condemned and executed for involvement (true or false) in a conspiracy against the King—is the would-be tyrannicide. The mention of Eurystheus is a jab directed at Alexander: usually the great admirer of Herakles, he is given by Kallisthenes the role of the Hero's cowardly and tyrannical enemy.

72. Cf. Curtius 8.12.17–18: Alexander remembered well the anguish he experienced after killing Kleitos; this memory helped him reserve his anger at Meleager, who, annoyed at the donation of a thousand talents to the Indian king Omphis, congratulated Alexander on having finally found—in India!—a man worth such a sum.

73. The first story, given by Arrian 4.10.5–11.6 and Curtius 8.5.5–18, is thus the first attempt by Alexander and members of his court to introduce *proskynesis*. It failed badly because of Kallisthenes' eloquent opposition, supported as it was by the thundering silence of many Macedonian notables. The second attempt, made famous by Kallisthenes' egress from the banquet "short of a kiss" (Arrian 4.12.3–5; Plutarch *Alex.* 54.4–6; derived from Chares of Mitylene, the *Eisangeleus*) was much more successful, Alexander having learned from the mistakes of the previous failure. see also Bosworth (1996: 77–78), who accepts the historicity of both stories and detects a "Hellenistic flavor" that "could well echo the contemporary debate" in the narrative of Arrian.

74. 8.5.11: *neHerculem quidem etPatrem Liberumprius dicatos deos, quam vicissentsecum viventium invidiam; tantum de quoqueposteros credere quantum praesens aetas spopondisset.*

75. Curtius 8.5.8; cf. Plutarch (*Mor.* 60b–c).

76. 8.5.17. Not surprisingly, this is exactly what happened after Alexander's death, when the Macedonians regretted having prevented their King from enjoying Divine honors already in his life (Curtius 10.5.11). Alexander's contribution to the fashion of *apotheosis* is discussed in [chapter 6](#).

77.

4.11.6:

δτου (Ηρακλέους) οί πρόγονοι ἐξ Ἀργούς ἐς Μακεδονίαν ἦλθον οὐδὲ βία
ἀλλὰ νόμῳ Μακεδόνων ἄρχοντες διετέλεσαν.

78. Arrian 4.10.6 is ambivalent:

ἄρξαι δὲ τοῦ λόγου Ἀνάξαρχον, ὥς πολὺ δικαιότερον ἂν
θεὸν νομιζόμενον Ἀλέξανδρον Διονύσου τε καὶ Ἡρακλέους, μὴ ὅτι τῶν ἔργων ἔνεκα ὅσα
καὶ ἡλίκα καταπέπρακται Ἀλεξάνδρῳ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅτι Διόνυσος μὲν Θηβαῖος ἦν, οὐδέν τι
προσῆκων Μακεδόσι, καὶ Ἡρακλῆς Ἀργεῖος, οὐδὲ οὗτος προσῆκων ὅτι μὴ κατὰ γένος τὸ
Ἀλεξάνδρου. The ambivalence stems from ἀλλὰ καὶ: but also. Thus, while
the protasis denies that it is Alexander's deeds that make him *more worthy of*
Divinity (μὴ ὅτι), the apodosis, with the particle καὶ (also) suggests it is a
possible, or alternative, reason. It would be dangerous, however, to make too much
of one word in Arrian, in a text that may otherwise be heavy with that writer's
adornment and invention.

3. THE PASSAGE TO INDIA

1. Arrian 4.28.4 (crossing the Hindu Kush). Strabo 15.1.17, on authority of
Aristoboulos, says the army set out from Paropamisadai (i.e. Alexandria) after the
setting of the Pleiades—just before the beginning of winter. Thus the delay was
roughly half a year long. On the chronology of the passage, the delay in Alexandria
and relevant astronomy see Brunt (1976–83: 507), Bosworth (1995: 142).

2. Metz Epitome 34: *ubi vident Alexandrum advenisse, gavisī sunt. Primum
Iovisfilium <Liberum Patrem>, alterum Herculem, tertium Alexandrum venisse
commemorabant.* Curtius 8.10.1: *Igitur Alexandro finis Indiae ingresso, gentium
[suarum] <finitimarum> reguli occurrerunt, imperata facturī, illum tertium
Iove genitum ad ipsos pervenisse memorantes; Patrem Liberum atque Herculem fama
cognitos esse, ipsum coram adesse cernique.* The highly condensed text of Justin does
not mention this incident; and it still falls within the great lacuna in Diodorus.

3. Cf. Strabo 15.1.7: “regarding Herakles, some tell the story that he went in the
opposite direction only, as far as the extreme limits on the west, whereas others say
that he went to both extreme limits” (trans. Jones, Loeb). We cannot know,
however, whether any member of the latter group (with an account of Herakles
invading India) wrote earlier than Alexander. Goukowsky (1978–81: II 11f.) argued
that the legend of Dionysos's conquest of India predated Alexander. His arguments
are tenuous and have not received wide acceptance (cf. Bosworth 1995: 200).

4. Among the writers who ignore the “welcome committee”: Tarn (1948);
schachermeyr (1973); Wilcken (1967); Homo (1951); Milns (1968); Green (1970);
Lane Fox (1973); Hammond (1981), Bosworth (1988a); O'Brien (1992); Worthington
(2004). Radet (1931: 28384) includes the episode in his narrative, eloquently
describing India as “*un terre religieuse, brûlante matrice des dieux,*” but does not
elaborate further; Goukowsky (1978–81: II 35), hypothetically and on literary
grounds, suggests Kleitarchos as the source, but offers no historical interpretation.

5. see the detailed and enlightening treatment by Bosworth (1996: 66–132).

6. Arrian 4.15.4. On Pharasmanes see also [Chapter 2](#), p. 28 “This impression of
geographical confusion...“For Alexander and the Amazons, see [chapter 5](#).

7. Bosworth (1996: 80–83).

8. Strabo 15.1.64 (trans. Jones, Loeb).

9. Bosworth (1996: 98)

10. Bosworth (1996: 121–22).

11. Bosworth (1996: 123).

12. The evidence for Alexander's intelligence operations is scanty. The *locus*

classicus is Strabo 2.1.6, telling how Alexander had used as informers the men best acquainted with the countries through which he passed. There was also an ἀναγραφὴ, which was kept by Xenokles, Alexander's treasurer. But as Engels (1978) has shown, the logistic challenges faced by Alexander were immense. That for the most part his army did not suffer from lack of provision, or get quite lost, is indication enough of an excellent system of information-gathering. This could not have been achieved by luck alone, nor could the King have done all the work by himself. He must have had a special staff of assistants responsible for contacting local experts, communicating with them and processing the information (see also Borza 1973: 302).

13. Bosworth (1995: 208). The observation on troop morale, like the snide remark that Alexander "wished" the myths to be true, may reflect Arrian's thoughts rather than Alexander's. Overtaking Dionysos, however, was clearly on Alexander's mind, as we saw in the crossing of the Iaxartes and as we shall see (with regard to Herakles) when we reach the Rock Aornos. For Alexander's idea that overtaking the divinities might hearten his troops see also Arrian 5.26.5–6.

14. Bosworth (1995: 207). Arrian's uncertainty is manifest: "I cannot make out whether it was Theban Dionysos, who came out of Thebes, or from Lydian Tmolos, leading an army against the Indians and falling on so many warlike nations, still unknown to the Greeks of his age, yet subduing none of them by force, save for the Indians themselves. Yet one must not be a precise judge of the myths of old concerning the Divine. For things that look unbelievable, when one regards them according to probability, do not appear at all incredible should one add the Divine to the story" (5.1.2).

15. Nysaian resistance: Curtius 8.10.7–11; for a reconstruction of events see Goukowsky (1978–81: II 26).

16. Lane Fox (1973: 341 f.); Wood (2001: 174).

17. For the literature on these equestrian women see Bosworth (1995:103–5); Baynham (2001: 122 esp. n. 33). See also Wilde (1999).

18. His Indian name is now usually rendered as Ambhi (the Greeks called him Omphis).

19. Bosworth (1996:122–23, with notes 112–14). Communications between Taxiles and Alexander: Diodorus 17.86.4, Curtius 8.12.5, Metz *Epitome* 49, Arrian 4.22.6. Intention to invade India: Arrian 4.15.6. Sisigupta (= Sisikottos): Arrian 4.30.4.

20. As does Narain (1957: ch.1; 1965: 164).

21. Curtius 7.5.28–35; Strabo 11.11.4. I accept the position of Parke (1985a), that the massacre of the Branchidai by Alexander—and *a priori* their presence in Baktria—is a historical event. Like the reception given to Alexander as third Son of Zeus, the story of the massacre of the Branchidai, which is indeed hard to stomach, has been ignored in modern scholarship (see Parke 1985a: 59 n.1 for a list of works omitting the incident). One notes with satisfaction that since the publication of Parke's article the Branchidai have been readmitted into history. The story now appears without reservation in Bosworth (1988a: 108–9), O'Brien (1992: 129–30), Wood (2001:152–54) and Worthington (2004: 175–76).

Most instructive is the treatment by Hammond. In 1981: 316n. 86 he explained that the episode was not included in the narrative "since it is generally regarded as unhistorical." In 1983: 142 he wrote, "That the story is a fiction is most probable." It is ascribed to Kleitarchos, who "was no respecter of the truth...and...introduced the Branchidae here for a sensational and dramatic purpose." In 1997: 141–42 the story is told in full and without any qualms, and it is ascribed to both Kallisthenes and Aristoboulos. It is remarkable how a couple of snide observations by Cicero and Quintilian have tyrannized the perception of Kleitarchos by modern Alexander

historians. If the story of the Branchidai is accepted, how—one ought to ask—should one regard the many other facts cavalierly thrown into the dustbin of Alexander-studies that Kleitarchos has become?

22. 7.5.29: *mores patrii nondum exoleverant sed iam bilingues erant paulatim a domestico externo sermone degeneres.*

23. Briant (1984: 97) and Holt (1988: 55 n. 20) adduce Kariatai, a Baktrian town, which was destroyed by Alexander (Strabo 11.11.4). Admittedly, its identification as Greek is merely a guess from the toponym; this seems to be the town's only mention in the ancient sources (cf. *RE*, s.v.).

24. Diodorus 17.83.1–2 (Alexandria and some other cities); Curtius 7.3.23 (Alexandria); Arrian 3.28.4 (Alexandria), 4.22.4–6 (Alexandria and Nikaia); Fraser (1996:140–51,161–62).

25. such interest of the local population in the religion of the newcomers can safely be assumed. Modern-day travelers to India will be familiar with the ubiquitous question, “What God(s) do you have?”

26. *Μάσσαγα* is Arrian's spelling (4.26.1). Curtius gives *Mazagae* (8.10.22); Diodorus has *Μάσσαγα* (book 17, table of contents, §34); Strabo—*Μασόγα πόλις* (15.1.27); *Mazaga* in the *Metz Epitome* 39. For some attempts at identification see Bosworth (1996: 169–70).

27. Curtius 8.10.32: *praecipue rudes talium operum terrebant mobiles turres tantasque moles, nulla ope quae cerneretur adiutas, deorum numine agi credebant; pila quoque muralia et excussas tormentis praegraves hastas negabant convenire mortalibus.* Cf. the *Metz Epitome* (41): *Macedones...alii e turribus tela tormentis concitata in defensores mittunt, alii machinationes ad murum applicant. Id ubi Cleophris animadvertit, turris tanta multitudine ad oppidum accurrere vimque tantam[que] telorum tormentis missorum, re invisitata pertimuit. Credit ea saxa nervis missa scorpionis <et> catapultae arcu expressa volare.* If we may understand the last sentence to mean that the Queen believed the missiles were flying of their own accord, we may understand the mix of terror and wonder that Alexander's siege engines inspired.

28. Curtius 9.7.12–14; Arrian 6.14.1–3.

29. Curtius 9.8.5–7; *territi nova facie deorum exercitum et alium Liberum Patrem...advertare credebant. [...] Ergo universi ad eos qui in armis erant currunt, furere clamitantes et cum dis proelium inituros.*

30. In the speech he gave Alexander during the trial of Hermolaos and the Pages, Curtius (8.8.15) makes Alexander exclaim, “If only the Indians might believe me to be a God! Wars rely on fame, and of tentimes even false beliefs take the place of truth” (*utinam Indi quoque deum esse me credant! Fama enim bella constant, et saepe etiam quod falso creditum est veri vicem obtinuit*).

31. One may perhaps conjecture that the introduction of a new presence of semi-divine status, equipped as it was with outstanding military force, was in part responsible for the staunch opposition offered by the Brahmins, the caste standing at the head of the religious system of India.

32. Diodorus 17.85.1–2:

Ἡρακλέα ταύτην τὴν πέτραν ἐπιβαλόμενον πολιορκεῖν ἀποστήναι διὰ τινὰς ἐπιγενομένους σεισμοὺς μεγάλους καὶ διοσημείας.

See also Strabo 15.1.8; Curtius 8.11.2; Arrian 4.28.1–2,4; Justin 12.7.12–13. *Metz Epitome* 46 mentions also an unconquerable town called Bagasdara, but there is surely some confusion here. In this account, too, Aornos was impregnable to Herakles. The details of the military operations vary between Arrian on the one hand and Diodorus and Curtius on the other, but it is clear in all the sources that local legends spoke of the impregnability of the Rock, and that these legends were known to Alexander. For the attempts to identify the Rock see the survey in

Bosworth (1995: 17880). The identification with the Pir-Sar by sir Aurel Stein is widely accepted (cited by Bosworth, *ibid.*).

33. In the *Romance* (A 3.4.8–9) version of this incident, before Aornos was attacked by Herakles, it was also besieged by Dionysos! Naturally, both had failed.

34. 15.1.9: *πλάσματα ταῦτα τῶν κολακευόντων Ἀλέξανδρον.*
35. 4.28.2:

μᾶλλον δὲ δοκῶ ὅτι οὐκ ἀφίκετο, ἀλλὰ πάντα γὰρ ὅσα χαλεπὰ οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἐς τοσόνδε ἄρα αὐξουσιν αὐτῶν τὴν χαλεπότητα, ὥς καὶ τῷ Ἡρακλεῖ ἂν ἄπορα γενέσθαι μυθεύειν. Incidentally, Arrian's logic is supported by a fragment of Simonides (509 in Campbell's *Loeb Greek Lyric* [1991] III 372–75) celebrating the achievements of one Glaukos, a boxer, against whom not even Alkmene's iron son would raise a hand in violence.

36. Beal (1884/1995: I 62 with note 216).

37. Arrian clearly recognized the importance of the episodes in Nysa and Aornos. In the speech he gave Alexander at the banks of the Hyphasis (5.25.3–26.8) Dionysos and Herakles play an important role. At 26.5–6, near the end of the speech, he points to the fact that by passing Nysa and taking Aornos the expedition had already surpassed the utmost achievements of Alexander's two divine predecessors. What was now left was to take the leftovers of Asia, a mere trifle.

38. 8.14.11–12: *Herculis simulacrum agmini peditum praeferebatur; id maximum erat bellantibus incitamentum, et deseruisse gestantis militare flagitium habebatur. Capitis etiam sanxerant poenam eis qui ex acie non rettulissent, metu quem ex illo hoste quondam conceperant etiam in religionem venerationemque converso.*

39. Diodorus 17.89.3–6; Curtius 9.1.1, 1.6; Plutarch, *Alex.* 61; Arrian 5.19.4–20.1; Justin 12.8.8.

40. According to John Chrysostom (*Ad Illuminandos Catechesis* 2.5 = Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Graeca* 49, p. 240), people used to carry coins of Alexander around the neck and on their feet, as protective amulets.

41. The history and significance of this issue has been demonstrated convincingly by Holt (2003: especially 139–65), whose explanation I accept and follow. In support of this view see Curtius 9.1.6: *copiarum duces coronis et M aureis singulos donat; ceteris quoque pro portione aut gradu quem in amicitia obtinebant, aut navatae operae, honos habitus est.* Oddly, Holt refers to Curtius's testimony only in passing (2003: 148 n. 24).

42. At the Hydaspes: Diodorus 17.87.4–88.1; Curtius 8.13.3, 6–7, 14.23: *magnum beluae iniecere terrorem*, 14.27: *praecipue terribilis illa facies erat*; Plutarch, *Alex.* 60.1 (according to Alexander's own testimony); Arrian 5.10.1–2, 11.4, 15.4–5, 16.2, especially

17.3: *καὶ ἦν τὸ ἔργον οὐδενὶ τῶν πρόσθεν ἀγώνων ἑοικός. τά τε γὰρ θηρία* ... At the Hyphasis: Diodorus 17.93.2; Curtius 9.2.4: *praecipuum terrorem elephantos* cf. 9.2.8, 16, 21; 3.12; Plutarch, *Alex.* 62.1–3; Arrian 5.25.1–2.

43. This coin, allegedly a part of the Mir Zakah II hoard discovered in 1992, was published for the first time by Bopearachchi and Flandrin (2005: 176–93). Since its publication, this coin has been at the center of a hot debate concerning its authenticity. Fischer-Bosser (2006), Hurter (2006) and Dahmen (2007: 9) have expressed varying degrees of conviction that this coin is, in fact, a fake. In March 2007 the argument on the coin's authenticity was continued in a colloquium at the *École des Hautes Études*, where no consensus has been reached (as I am informed by Andrew Stewart, one of the speakers in the colloquium, in private correspondence from Aug. 2, 2007). One eagerly awaits the publication of the papers from this colloquium. Even more eagerly does one await the appearance of further evidence, which would decide the matter once and for all. Should such new evidence prove the

coin to be a fake, the reader is advised to transfer the core of the argument expressed here to the discussion in [chapter 6](#) of Ptolemy Soter's use of the elephant scalp motif on his own coins.

44. Plates 6–10 in Holt (2003: between pages 67 and 68).

45. Boppearachchi and Flandrin (2005: facing p. 200), and an enlarged obverse on the cover.

46. Arrian 6.1.1; 6.2.2–4, citing Ptolemy. Strabo (15.1.17), who gives the time of the embarkation on the journey downstream, cites Aristoboulos. Diodorus (17.95.3), Curtius (9.3.21) and Justin (12.9.1) put the navy on the Akesines, which is probably a mistake deriving from a common source.

47. The geography is difficult. One city of the Siboi is known from archaeology—the ancient *Ḫibipura* (see Bosworth [1996: 218] for details and bibliography about the Siboi). However, courses of the Indus system rivers have changed since antiquity and absolute certainty is impossible. For a suggested reconstruction see Erdosy's map (6) in *BAGRW*.

48. Curtius 9.4.3.

49. Diodorus 17.96.1–2; Curtius 9.4.1–3; Justin 12.9.2; cf. Strabo 15.1.8; Arrian, 5.3.4; *Indica* 5.12.

50. To a modern reader this question may seem as detached from reality as an essay on the education of the children of Lady Macbeth; not so for Alexander. For him Herakles was real, and the question was a historical, not a mythological one.

51. For this and the following statement see Tucci (1964: 172–73).

52. See Goukowsky (1978–81: II 36–7 with appropriate notes); Bosworth (1996: 218). Both accept the connection between the Siboi and *Ḫiva* and supply further bibliography. For a reconstruction of the area inhabited by the Siboi at the time of Alexander's arrival see Eggermont (1975: 138–44).

53. Arrian 6.3.1–2.

54. See, for example, Pausanias 2.18.7: after killing Hippokoön and his children Herakles entrusted the (Argive) land to Tyndareus, and that of Messenia to Nestor: *παρακαταθέσθαι τὴν χώραν; παρακαταθήκην δοθῆναι*. For Dorieus see the discussion in [chapters 1](#) and [2](#).

55. Diodorus 4.29; Strabo 5.2.7.

56. Alexandria Eschate: Arrian 4.4.1, with Bosworth's note (1996: 26) on the fate of the sick who were left behind in foundations or to strengthen garrisons when they should get well—they seem to have had very little choice. Alexandria in Caucaso: according to Curtius 7.3.23 Alexander settled those soldiers *quorum opera uti desisset* in the original foundation of the city, while Arrian 4.22.5 puts the settlement of these discarded soldiers (*ἀπόμαχοι*) only after Alexander's descent from Baktria. Arigaion: Arrian 4.24.7.

57. Similarly, in the Nysa story Arrian (5.1.5) makes Akouphis say that his city was founded by Dionysos *ἐκ τῶν ἀπομάχων στρατιωτῶν*. This information is given in direct speech, and as such it is suspect. But in *Ind* 1.4 the same information is part of the running narrative. Cf. Bosworth (1996: 204): “the overwhelming probability is that *Ind*. 1.4–5, [...] provided the material for Acuphis' speech”.

58. The story is told in Diodorus 17.100–101; Curtius 9.7.16–26. There is slight variance in detail, yet for the most part the two accounts are in agreement and complement each other. For an excellent analysis of the incident, considering especially the presence of embassies from the recently beaten Malloi and Oxydrakai, see Bosworth (1996: 115–17; with additional detail on the career of Dioxippos).

59. According to Aristoboulos (cited by Athenaios 6.251a), Dioxippos was present in action when Alexander was wounded in one of the battles (we are not told where). It thus seems likely that the accusations were far from true.

60. Koragos in Diodorus (17.100.2); Curtius gives his name as Corratas or Horrotas (9.7.17).

61. Diodorus 17.100.5: οἰονεῖ τις θεομαχία μέλλουσα γίνεσθαι. The motive of symmetry in the account of Diodorus is striking. Dioxippos is armed with a ῥόπαλον σύμμετρον (100.5), rendered by Welles (Loeb) as “well-balanced” club. Koragos casts his javelin ἐκ συμμέτρου διαστήματος (100.6).

62. Herakles, too, we must remember, was a boxer and pankratiast (Pausanias 5.8.4).

63. Bosworth (1996: 116), following Curtius 9.7.23.

64. Bosworth (1996: 116).

65. Cf. Bosworth (1996: 116 n. 89). Alexander's habit of dressing up as Herakles will be discussed in the next chapter.

66. Except for the scene of Alexander's last illness, to be treated in the next chapter.

4. SYMBIOSIS

1. According to Diodorus, Zeus stopped begetting children on mortal women after Alkmene, Herakles' mother, “since he had no hope that he would beget in after times one who would be worthy of his former children and was unwilling to have the better followed by the worse” (4.14.4; trans. Oldfather, Loeb). Alexander's recognition as the Son of Zeus-Ammon will thus have entailed an incredible amount of pressure to prove his worth.

2. Malkin (1987: 189–266).

3. Cf. the conclusion of Alexander's speech in Dio Chrysostom (Or. 2.78; trans. Cohoon, Loeb): “But if the inevitable decree of fate snatches him [the good and just King] away before reaching old age, yet Zeus vouchsafes unto him a goodly renown and praise (μνήμησ' ἀγαθῆς καὶ εὐφημίας) among all men for ever and ever, as indeed [...] he honored our own ancestor, who, because of his virtue (διὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν), was considered the son of Zeus—I mean Herakles.”

4. Ross (1955:147, № 4) = Athenaios 15.696b-d = Didymos 6.23–34 (Pearson and Stephens 1983: 19–21).

5. An earlier, lengthier example of the role of Aretē in Herakles' life, extolling the sweet reward it brings—praise—is the words of wise man Prodikos, as remembered and paraphrased by Xenophon (*Mem.* 2.1.21–34), and later cited by Cicero (*Off.* 1.118/32). Cf. also Dio Chrysostom's elaboration on the same theme (Or. 1.66–84).

6. Day and month: Plutarch *Alex.* 75 *fin.*. Year and Alexander's age: Arrian 7.28.1. The date is calculated to the evening of June 10, 323 by Samuel (1962: 46–47) according to a Babylonian document.

7. Aristoboulos exerted much effort to dispel the notion of Alexander's habitual drunkenness. In describing the fatal banquet which ended with the murder of Kleitos, he neglected to give the circumstances, mainly the fact that both Alexander and Kleitos were both deeply inebriated (Arrian 4.8.9). Unlike other writers, who ascribed Alexander's fortuitous escape from the conspiracy of the Pages to the fact that he enjoyed his drinking party so much that he prolonged it till after dawn, Aristoboulos told how he was warned against returning to his tent by a strange, half-crazed syrian prophetess; yet even he does not deny that Alexander spent the entire night drinking (Arrian 4.13.5–6; in Curtius's version the advice is given only after dawn, and serves as excuse to prolong the banquet even further; 8.6.14). In general, so Aristoboulos says, Alexander drank little himself, and extended his symposia for the sake of the Companions (Arrian 7.29.4; in more detail, but without mention of Aristoboulos: Plutarch *Alex.* 23.1–2). This excuse cannot be taken seriously.

8. Kallisthenes: Plutarch *Mor.* 454d-e Polykleitos: Athenaios 12.539a. Chares: Plutarch *Alex.* 70.1–2. On the special relationship of Alexander with the wine-God Dionysos see O'Brien (1992). For a selection of passages on Alexander's drinking habits see appendix B.

9. 17.117.1–2. The grand party was a **κῶμος**, traditionally a procession in honor of Dionysos.

10. *Alex.* 75.5:

ἀλλὰ ταῦτά τινες φοντο δεῖν γράφειν ὥσπερ δράματος μεγάλου τραγικὸν ἐξόδιον καὶ περιπαθεὺς πλάσαντες. On this kind of drinking vessel—**Ἡρακλέους σκύφος**—see Huttner (1997: 94).

11. Cf. the story of the Gordian Knot (Plutarch *Alex.* 18.4). The common story has Alexander cut through the tortuous knot, whereas Aristoboulos makes him take out the pin around which the knot was tied. The puzzle is thus solved with cunning rather than insolent, not to say hubristic, violence. Another example is given by Arrian (7.22.2–4): while Alexander was cruising the marshland of Babylonia—he was steering the trireme himself—a gust of wind carried the diadem off his head. A sailor jumped into the water and rescued it, binding it around his own head to prevent it from getting wet. Alexander gave the man a talent as his reward, but when his seers interpreted this as an evil omen, he also ordered the sailor to be beheaded. This shocking act of cruelty is assuaged by Aristoboulos, who says the man was merely flogged. It appears that in his history Aristoboulos made a point of defending Alexander's memory, rejecting or giving a more positive rendering of some unpleasant situations.

12. Cf. Curtius 10.5.36: *quidquid mortalitas capiebat impleret.*

13. Diodorus 17.110.8; Plutarch *Alex.* 72.2.

14. Diodorus 17.116.5–117.1.

15. This is given as the actual truth, *re autem vera*, by Justin (12.13.10–14.9) and by the author of the *Liber de Morte* (87–89, 98 ff. with vivid detail). It is reported as an alternative version by Diodorus (17.117.5–118.2), Plutarch (*Alex.* 77.1–5, implicating Aristotle in the plot) and Arrian (7.27.1–2). The story is accepted as historical by Rubensohn (1977: 420).

16. In the very act of overdrinking Alexander was emulating his great ancestor: Herakles was a proverbial drunkard. The evidence is conveniently gathered in Athenaios: 10.412b; 10.441a–b; 10.442d; 11.469d; 11.470e; 11.499a *cum* 11.781d; 11.781c cf. 11.474ft 12.512e–f. The symbol of the cup was closely associated with Herakles. As a reward for bearing his child, Zeus made Alkmene the gift of a cup (Athenaios 11.474f, 781c, on the authority of Pherekydes and Herodotos of Herakleia). Herakles also used the Sun's cup to sail across the seas to Iberia, on his quest to fetch the cattle of Geryones (Athenaios 11.781d, from Stesichoros).

17. In his description of the prophecy of Ammon concerning Alexander's *apotheosis* Curtius (4.7.27) used the unusual phrase *excederet ad deos*. As noted by Rolfe (*adloc.* in the Loeb edition), the same expression was used by Velleius Paterculus (1.2.1) regarding Herakles.

18.

ἡ μὲν οὖν νύμφη πρὸ τῆς νυκτός, ἡ συνεῖρχθησαν εἰς τὸν θάλαμον, ἔδοξε . . . ὁ δὲ Φίλιππος ὑστέρῳ χρόνῳ μετὰ τὸν γάμον . . . (Plutarch, *Alex.* 2.3–4). see also, for Herakles: Hesiod, *Shield of Herakles* 27–56; Apollodoros, *Lib.* 2.4.8; Diodorus 4.9.1–3; scholiast on Homer, *Od.* 11.266; Tzetzes, *Schol. on Lykophron* 33; Hyginus, *Fab.* 29; Plautus, *Amphitryo*, 97ff. (where, however, Alkmene is already pregnant when Amphitryon sets out to battle). For Alexander: Justin 11.11.3, 12.16.2; *Romance* 1.4–10.

19. Pindar, *Nem.* 1.33(50) ff. (by whom the myth was already regarded as ancient); Theokritos, *Id.* 24; Apollodoros, *Lib.* 2.4.8; Plautus, *Amphitryo* 1107 ff.;

Diodorus 4.10.1; Virgil, *Aen.* 8.288–89; Hyginus, *Fab.* 30; Pausanias 1.24.2 (a plastic representation of the scene).

20. Plutarch, *Alex.* 2.6; Justin 11.11.3, 12.16.2.

21. Diodorus 4.10.1.

22. For the date see Sandbach (1939: 196), who argues for a later date (at least for the final version) based on a stylistic analysis of the Plutarchan corpus; and Powell (1939: 23536), who claims that Alexander's biography served Plutarch as a source when writing *De Fortuna. Contra* Hamilton (1969: xxiii n. 4) with bibliography.

23. Plutarch *Mor.* 341c-f.

24. For various associations of Tychē with Zeus see Ferguson (1970: 82–83).

25. Plutarch, *Alex.* 3.4. Hamilton thinks “it is perfectly conceivable that Philip may have seen such an incident as Plutarch describes,” and believes that the story of Alexander's divine paternity was in circulation already in Alexander's youth, following the estrangement of his parents (1969:4–5; with earlier bibliography). He is followed by Carney (2000: 277 n. 61). For a graphic representation of the romantic version see Ross (1963).

26. For detailed treatment see Amitay (2008) and the discussion in [chapter 1](#).

27. Herodotus 1.174.

28. οὕτω χαλεπὸν ἀνθρώπῳ τὰ θεῖα βιάσασθαι (2.1.5).

29. Tempe: Diodorus 4.18.6–7; Pheneos: Pausanias 8.14.1–3; Kephisos: Pausanias 9.38.7 (cf. Diodorus 4.18.7, where he creates a lake, thus drowning the Minyan Orchomenos); Lake Bistonis: Strabo, 7. frag. 43 (Jones, Loeb); Nile: Diodorus 1.19.1–4—with the remark that this is the source for the myth about Prometheus, the liver-eating eagle and Herakles. Considering the details Diodorus gives, this is rather obscure.

30. Strabo 10.2.9; Diodorus 4.35.3–4.

31. Pausanias 7.3.9.

32. We find one Mikkalos of Klazomenai in Alexander's service in 323 (Arrian 7.19.5).

33. Cf. Curtius 8.11.24. Toward the end of his life Alexander was to contemplate another grand work, the rearrangement of the Euphrates canal system. He even made a reconnaissance tour in the marshland, but did not live long enough to embark on the project (Arrian 7.21).

34. since, as we have seen in [chapter 1](#), the *Egersis* festival was off-limits for Greeks in general, there was no reason for Alexander to perceive a sacrifice in Old Tyre as sacrilegious, or in any way insufficient, on grounds of traditional religion.

35. For a similar opinion see Takács (1995: 112). Gutman (1940: 283) suggests that Alexander was not unaware of at least some aspects of Tyrian religion.

36. Plutarch *Alex.* 29.1–3, the fullest account; Curtius 4.8.16, who reports the dedication of a golden mixing bowl; and Arrian 3.6.1.

37. Alexander's example indeed became a tradition. The games were held from that time on every four (inclusively five) years, continuing as late as the early third century c.E. (Bonnet 1988: 57–58). In the second century B.c. the festival—with Herakles still the focal point—drew participants from the Jerusalem priesthood: 2 *Maccabees* 4:18–19, with Abel (1949:335).

38. Arrian 3.6.1; with Bosworth (1980a: 278).

39. Plutarch *Mor.* 826c-d. I follow here the sensible reconstruction of Kingsley (1986: 169), accepted also by Stewart (1993: 120 n. 56). The benefaction is recorded in an inscription from Kyrene (*SEG* 9 [1954]: no. 2 lines 14, 36). Seneca the Younger (*Ben.* 1.13) makes the embassy Corinthian, and puts it at the end of Alexander's reign, probably at Babylon. Gauthier (1985: 44) opts for Megara, without specifying the date. Huttner (1997: 91–92) prefers a date at the beginning

of the reign, when Alexander was still in Europe, but is undecided between the two cities. Fredricksmeyer (2003: 263) adopts the earliest date and favors Megara.

40. Cf. Burstein (1991: 58). Only Plutarch opens his biography of Alexander with a description of his questionable paternity. Curtius may have done the same, but his first two books are lost.

41. The main sources for the visit are: Strabo 17.1.43; Diodorus 17.49.2–51 fin.; Plutarch *Alex.* 27; Curtius 4.7.5–28; Arrian 3.3–4; Justin 11.11.2–11. Witness the strong emphasis on divine guide and aid in practically all accounts of the journey, and especially in Kallisthenes (cited by Strabo), who wrote the earliest and ‘official’ account.

42. This part of the story was told by Kallisthenes and seems to have been part of the narratives of Ptolemy and Aristoboulos (Arrian 3.3.4; cf. §§3, 5–6). It also appears in the “vulgate tradition.” Strabo is unique among the ancient sources in treating the story of rainfall as flattery, allowing no room in his narrative for Tychē.

43. See the account of Bayle (1849: 67–69).

44. As has been argued above, this may have been one of the deep reasons for the aggravation caused by the victory of Dioxippos ([chapter 3](#) and more below).

45. Herodotus 8.131.

46. Diodorus 17.51.2–3; Plutarch *Alex.* 27.5–7; Curtius 4.7.27; Justin 11.11.9. Plutarch gives this version as the ancient *communis opinio*:
ταῦτα περὶ τῶν χρησμῶν οἱ πλείστοι γράφουσιν.

47. The Ammonian side of the story has been given very little attention; hardly surprising, as our sources give us only Alexander's point of view, and that in a very confusing fashion. Yet the coming of Alexander aroused great religious devotion, which lasted some nine centuries after his visit. This is attested by Procopius of Caesarea, writing in the time of Justinian, who mentions a cult of Alexander in the north African community of Augila (clearly within Siwah's sphere of influence), which had survived down to his own time (*Aed.* 6.2.16). The piety and affection inspired by Alexander were long-lasting indeed!

48. The motif of revenge raises serious difficulties. For one, according to Egyptian lore Alexander's avenging his Divine father's death was not sacrilegious at all. One manifestation of Horus—Harendotes—means exactly, “Horus the avenger of his father” (Bonnet 1952: 269; *LÄ* II 964–66; Stoneman 2008: 21 and n. 42). Deciding whether the priest's words are supposed to emphasize the importance of Philippos over Ammon, to highlight the difference in obligatory filial vengeance between Ammon and Osiris as the Pharaoh's fathers, or to effect a diplomatic solution of both difficulties, must remain a future endeavor. Stoneman's (2008: 24) interpretation of the *Romance* telling suggests that Alexander became his father's avenger “in that he has killed the man who cuckolded his legal father Philip.” This interpretation is well in line with the humorous treatment of the *Romance*, but does not fit the historical accounts, which do not mention Nektanebo at all.

49. Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 2.4.9, with Pausanias 2.33.1. Plutarch has Pittheus, the grandfather of Theseus, spread a report that his grandson was the son of Poseidon (*Thes.* 6.1), while Hyginus has Poseidon concede fatherhood of Theseus to Aigeus (*Fab.* 37). [Chapter 6](#) in Plutarch's *Life of Theseus* is a good example of this Hero's role as the ‘lieutenant’ of Herakles, participating in the campaign against tyrants and monsters and mopping up what pockets of resistance Herakles had left behind. The two Heroes were also good friends (although they rarely went on adventures together).

50. So much so, that the exact same pattern was repeated with Seleukos, who was said to be the son of Apollo, but also manifestly recognized Antiochos as his earthly father, naming after him his newly founded capital. On seleukos see more in

Chapter 6.

51. In most recensions chapters 1–3 (chap. 1 in ε). Accessible English translation by Stoneman (1991: 35–37).

52. For the questionable historicity of this account see the discussion in [Chapter 1](#).

53. On the notion of the Pharaoh as Horus see: Bonnet (1952: 308–9); *LÄ* s.v. “Horus”, B. (cols. 15–20); Hart (1986: 89–90); Watterson (1988:100); *OEAES*.v. “Horus.”For a graphic representation of a very Greek Alexander with Horus’s hallmark crown see Stewart (1993: 169, pl. 33; small figure in the upper left quadrant).

54. Milne (1901: 277,283); Bonnet (1952: 274); *LÄ* s.v. “Harpokrates” (col. 1006); Pinch (2004: 141,146–47). In Greek eyes, this divinity was also closely connected with Apollo (already in Herodotus 2.156). More on the triangle Apollo-Herakles-Alexander presently.

55. For this and the following statements see *LÄ*, s. v. “Herakleopolis Magna;” *EAAE* s. v. “Heracleopolis.” Merkelbach (2001: 89).

56. Zivie-Coche (2004: 31).

57. For Alexander’s Royal titles in Egypt, see [Chapter 1](#), p. 24 with note 114 on p. 174. During his stay in Egypt Alexander discussed philosophy and theology with the Egyptian sage Psammon—one of many opportunities he will have had to inquire about the religious implications of his new status as Pharaoh (Plutarch, *Alex.* 27.10).

58. The story was well known in antiquity: Cicero, *Nat. D.* 3.16.42; Plutarch *Mor.* 387d, 557c; Pausanias 3.21.8, 8.37.1, 10.13.7–8; Hyginus, *Fab.* 32; Servius, *InAen.* 8.299.

59. That was the common story. The Delphians maintained that the Pythia refused to prophesy because Herakles was tainted with the blood of Iphitos, Eurystheus’s brother (Pausanias 10.13.8).

60. Gythion; Pausanias 3.21.8.

61. Temple of the *Δέσποινα* in Akakesion: Pausanias 8.37.1; Delphi: 10.13.7. This latter work had Leto and Artemis on the one hand, and Athena on the other, trying to restrain the two agonists.

62. Incidentally, the tripod taken by Herakles is said to have been dedicated by Kroisos the Lydian—a fascinating mixture of history and myth.

63. Cf., with slight variation, the Syriac version (Budge 1889: 56). The author of this telling seems to have borrowed the tripod-snatching motif from the usual Herakles myth, and the word-play theme from the story of Alexander’s visit to Delphi.

64. Modern scholarship is still far from a consensus on the historicity of this anecdote. For the opposing opinions see Whitehead (2000: 459–60).

65. 17.93.4: *τὴν μὲν γὰρ Πυθίαν ἀνίκητον αὐτὸν.*

66. Hyperides *Dem.* 7.32. On the textual and other difficulties presented by this passage see Whitehead (2000: 458–59).

67. *Ἡρακλῆος γὰρ ἀνικίτου γένος;* Fr. 8.1 (ed. Prato 1968: 31).

68. Weinstock (1957: 214). For epigraphic evidence from Asia Minor see Ramsay (1882: 214).

69. Apollodoros *Bibl.* 2.7.7.

70. The main argument against Alexander as the real father is the strong improbability that the identity, nay the existence, of this Herakles could have been hidden for so many years, especially after Alexander’s death, when every thought was turned to finding a suitable arrangement for succession. For this opinion see Tarn (1921 and 1948: 330ff., with *loci*). However, Tarn dismisses too easily the fact that the existence of this Herakles was purportedly mentioned during the inheritance

crisis in Babylon, either by Nearchos and Ptolemy (Curtius 10.6.10–11) or by Meleagros (Justin 13.2.6–7). Recent scholarship tends to accept Alexander's actual paternity of Herakles: Brunt (1975); Huttner (1997: 100); Carney (1996: 573, with Barsine's biographic details; 2000:101–5,149–50; and 2003: 243–45); Bosworth (2002: 30 n. 8,42 n. 50), who also points to the familial connection of Nearchos with the young boy (p. 38); Heckel (2006: 138). If he was indeed Alexander's son, the question remains why his candidacy was rejected so decidedly in 323.

71. Statius, *Silv.* 4.6.59–74; Martial, *Epig.* 9.43; Anderson (1928b: 15); Huttner (1997:9293); Fredricksmeier (2003: 262).

72. Ephippos is cited by Athenaios (12.537e–f). Other costumes that Alexander was in the habit of wearing were those of Ammon, Artemis and Hermes. While the context of Ammon seems clear, Hermes and especially Artemis are more puzzling. We read in Arrian 1.17.10,18.2 that, during his stay in Ephesos, Alexander dedicated to the Goddess the tribute formerly paid by the city to Darius, and that he sacrificed to the Goddess and held a military parade. Hermes does not appear anywhere in the surviving histories of Alexander. In the *Romance* (A, 2.13.5–14.2) Ammon does appear to Alexander in a dream in the guise of Hermes, complete with the messenger's staff, short cloak and stick, and gives Alexander some good advice. When he wakes up, Alexander sets out to follow the God's advice, dressed in the same attire. It is not clear if or how this story may be connected with Ephippos's report.

73. For example Tarn (1948: 354 n. 2), following Schwartz (1900:127), who asserted that Ephippos's work was: *ein pasquill, kein Geschichtsbuch*. see also Pearson (1960: 61–67). *Contra* Badian (1961: 663), who warns against “the reluctance—common among English-speaking scholars—to accept any evidence that conflicts with an idealized *a priori* image of Alexander.” Ephippos's account is accepted also by Bosworth (1977: 65–66).

74. Diodorus 16.44.3.

75. Diodorus 16.48.3.

76.

μόνος αἴτιος τοῦ ζῆν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις . . . διὰ τῆς αὐτοῦ ἰατρικῆς.

Athenaios 7.289b. Cf. Plutarch *Ages.* 21.5; *Mor.* 191a, 213a; Aelian *VH* 12.51.

77. Plutarch *Mor.* 192a.; 535a.

78. Athenaios, 7.289d–f.

79. His story is told in Diodorus 17.100–101, Curtius 9.7.16–26; see discussion in [Chapter 3](#).

80. Vitruvius, preface to book 2.

81. Athenaios 7.290a. As the source for the anecdote is Pythermos of Ephesos (late third or early second century B.c.) this is probably either Antiochos I or II.

82. Huttner (1997: 114), and on his page 115 see the note on the *Iskandarnamēh* of Nizami, where a lion-skin-clad, club-bearing Alexander fights a giant black man.

83. Alexander's new coinage is discussed in [Chapter 1](#).

84. On the topic of the crypto-portrait see Mörholm (1991: 52); Stewart (1993: 15859) with earlier bibliography; Arnold-Biucchi (2006: 51).

85. On the sarcophagus see Stewart (1993: 294–306, with plates 101–6 and bibliography on pp. 422–23).

86. Stewart (1993: 306, plate 103).

87. Stewart (1993: 331–32, plate 126).

88. Another statue of Alexander, which unfortunately has not survived, was set in the temple of Herakles-Melqart in Gades. It was at the sight of this statue that Julius Caesar expressed his frustration with the tardiness of his own career

(Suetonius, *Div. Iul.* 7). More on Gades and the Pillars of Herakles below.

89. 17.3.7. The text gives Maurousioi, but the Pharousioi fit the context better (Meineke's emendation).

90. *ad. Aen.* 4.196: *Liber, vel, ut alii dicunt, Hercules, cum Indos peteret et per deserta Libyae [...]* exercitum duceret, fatigatus siti Iovis patris imploravit auxilium.

91. Strabo 17.1.43. Cf. Diodorus 3.73.3, with Nock (1928: 142); Rusten (1982: 111).

92. Plutarch, *Lyk.* 4. For the little we know of Aristokrates see *FGrH* 591; Boring (1979: 59).

93. The meeting of Alexander with the “naked philosophers” was a staple story: Berlin Papyrus 13044 (Wilcken 1923 = *FGrH* 153.9); Plutarch, *Alex.* 64; Geneva Papyrus 271 (= Willis and Maresch 1988); Arrian 7.2.1–4; *Bavli Tamid* 31b–32a. The story was highly popular well into the Middle Ages. For sources, discussion and bibliography see Stoneman (1995).

94. Diodorus 4.27.

95. *Yerushalmi 'Avodah Zarah*, 3.1 (42.3).

96. 2.41 (L recension = Stoneman 1991: 122–23). The descriptions of the world vary somewhat in detail. Naturally, Rabbi Yonah may have heard or read a slightly different version of the story than the ones we possess today.

97. The original *Mishnaic* definition is reminiscent of another part of the *Romance*, where Darius sends Alexander a whip, a ball and a chest of gold. The whip symbolizes Alexander's puerility, the ball is supposed to keep him busy, the chest of gold to bribe his soldiers. Alexander offered a different reading of these symbolic gestures: a whip to flog the barbarians, a ball to symbolize the world—his dominion—and the chest of gold to stand for the tribute the Persians would pay him (1.36–38). The explanation of the rod in the *Mishnah*: “a rod to thrash the world with” is similar to the whip in the *Romance*.

98. Herodotus uses the name often and casually: 1.202; 2.33; 4.8, 42–43, 152, 181, 185, 196; 8.132. For a possible Phoenician context for the Pillars of Herakles at the western end of the Mediterranean see Aubet (2001: 153).

99. 4.18.5 (trans. Oldfather, Loeb).

100. Josephus, *BJ* 7.244–51. The matter-of-fact way in which Josephus mentions Alexander's gates shows that their story was already well established at the time (about a century after Diodorus). A more developed telling appears in the *Romance*: ε recension 39.4–8; γ 3.26a. On the issue of the Caspian Gates fortified by Alexander see Anderson (1928b). Originally the main gateway between western and eastern Iran, the term “Caspian Gates” came to signify one of the passes through the Caucasus. The actual location of the gates, a matter which greatly interested Anderson, does not concern us here. Alexander's Gates will be discussed further in [Chapter 7](#).

101. See Arrian 3.20.2 for Alexander's passage there in his chase after Darius.

102. Pliny, *NH* 6.12.30, 15.40.

103. Suetonius, *Nero* 19. This topic will be discussed in detail in [Chapter 7](#).

104. The quotations below taken from von Hammer (1834: 54).

105.

ἐὺφυῶς ἡ νῆσος αὐτῇ κεῖται πρὸς τὰς ἐφ' ὅλην τὴν οἰκουμένην στρατείας;

Diodorus 4.17.3.

τὴν μὲν Λιβύην . . . ἐξημέρωσεν;

106. Diodorus 4.17.4.

107. This myth comes from the latter part of the first century B . c . ; we do not know when it was first told.

108. Plutarch *Mor.* 328c.

τὸ μὲν Ἑλληνικὸν ἀρετῇ τὸ δὲ βαρβαρικὸν κακίᾳ τεκμαίρεσθαι;
329d.

111. εἰ δὲ μὴ ταχέως ὁ δεῦρο καταπέμψας τὴν Ἀλέξανδρου ψυχὴν ἀνεκαλέσαστο δαίμων,
εἰς ἃν νόμος ἅπαντας ἀνθρώπους διωκεῖτο καὶ πρὸς ἐν δίκαιον ὥς πρὸς κοινὸν ἐπέβλεπον
φῶς. νῦν δὲ τῆς γῆς ἀνήλιον μέρος ἔμεινεν, ὅσον Ἀλέξανδρον οὐκ εἶδεν; 330d.

βασιλικὸν καὶ θεῖον ἄθλον;

112.

342a, with 330d.

113. The notion that Alexander was sent by the Gods to humanity and later recalled is shared by Curtius (10.6.6). See further in chapters 6 and 8.

114. It is striking that Plutarch chose to finish his narrative with this scene, rather than with Alexander's death in Babylon. A reader ignorant of Alexander's history might well suppose the Macedonian had died in India. Since we can fully expect Plutarch's audience to have known that Alexander survived his wound, we should all the more appreciate the resonance of Alexander's parting message.

5. AMAZON QUEEN

1. *Alex.* 46.1–2. I am concerned here only with the story in which Alexander actually meets the Amazon Queen. In the *Romance* (3.25–26) we find an alternative version, which replaces the actual meeting with an exchange of letters, thus obliterating any possibility for the sexual encounter which stands at the heart of the original story. For the moralist approach which underlies the *Romance* telling see Stoneman (1994: 103).

2. The sources: Diodorus 17.77.1–3; Curtius 6.5.24–32; Justin 12.3.5–7. For a comprehensive treatment of the main problems and their discussion in modern scholarship see Baynham (2001).

ἀλκῇ τε καὶ ἀνδρεία;

3. (Diodorus 17.77.3). One wonders whether praise of the Queen's "manliness" was not a jibe by Diodorus aimed at the King's homosexual tendencies.

4. For a similar sentiment see already Mederer (1936: 90–92), who pioneered modern discussion of the story.

5. The case of Chares is instructive. A "trifler, immersed in Court ceremonials and dinners, the minutiae of his office" (Tarn 1948: II70), classified among those "who catered principally to the public's interest in gossip and scandal" (Pearson 1960: 50), he appears here nonetheless as a responsible historian who took care to refute a commonly told fable. This is the same Chares who insisted that Darius and Alexander had met face-to-face at Issos (he even said Alexander had received a wound in the encounter [Plutarch, *Alex.* 20.8]). Which only goes to show the danger in making sweeping generalizations and resolute statements about authors whose works have not reached us.

πλάσμα φασὶ γεγονέναι τοῦτο;

6. *Alex.* 46.2. The story was told by many others: Plutarch begins his list of positive authorities with ?

οἱ πολλοὶ λέγουσιν.

7. Hamilton (1969:125) on Ptolemy only; Bosworth (1995:102–3) on both Ptolemy and Aristoboulos; Baynham (2001: 118), accepting Bosworth's view.

8. Cf. Brunt (1976–83; II 494); Hammond (1981: 177).

9. E.g., the murder of Andromachos by some samaritans, and their ensuing

punishment (Curtius 4.8.9–11).

10. Their verdict would thus release him from the necessity to comment on the matter himself. In the case of Atropates' Amazons (on whom more presently) Arrian felt obliged to address the issue exactly where his main sources were silent (7.13.2–6).

11. 11.5.4 with Bosworth (1995: 103).

12. *ibid.*

οἱ μάλιστα τῆς ἀληθείας φροντίσαντες οὐκ εἰρήκασιν, οὐδ' οἱ πιστευόμενοι μάλιστα οὐδενὸς μέμνηνται τοιούτου, οὐδ' οἱ εἰπόντες τὰ αὐτὰ εἰρήκασιν.

Of the first two groups the former, who cared for the truth, took the time to correct a common mistake or fancy; the latter, trustworthy and sober historians, just ignored the whole issue.

The Loeb translation (H. L. Jones), offering: “those who care most for the truth do not make the assertion.” is misleading. The natural meaning of οὐ φημι is ‘say

(LSJ⁹ φημι III).

no’, ‘deny’, ‘refuse’. Furthermore, Jones’ translation causes an unnecessary repetition in the text.

13. Plutarch (46.2) does seem to make a distinction between two groups, indicated by πρὸς δὲ τούτοις. We do not know, however, whether his division is similar to Strabo’s. From the fact that Chares, Aristoboulos and Ptolemy appear on one part of the list, Hekataios and

Douris on the other, we may perhaps conjecture that Plutarch distinguished here between first-hand and other historians.

14. One name is conspicuous by its absence: Kallisthenes. Possibly, his history never reached the place where the story of the Amazon Queen would be told. Plutarch, who knew Kallisthenes and used him in other places, could be expected to mention his name, had it been relevant. For examples of Plutarch’s use of Kallisthenes see the journey to siwah, *Alex.* 27.4; also the battle at Gaugamela, *Alex.* 33.10 (the latest event for which he cited Kallisthenes).

15. Skythian Princess: Curtius 8.1.9; Plutarch, *Alex.* 46.3; Arrian 4.15.2. Atropates: Arrian 7.13.2–6. Another mention of Amazons relates to Pharasmanes and his attempt to lure Alexander with the promise of a campaign against the Amazons (Arrian 4.15.4).

16. Bosworth (1995: 102–3) with a survey of the scholarship and detailed discussion.

17. Mederer offered the Atropates episode as a possible solution (1936: 90–91), a position shared by Badian (1985: 484 n.2).

18. 7.13.3:

ταῦτα δὲ οὕτε Ἀριστόβουλος οὕτε Πτολεμαῖος οὕτε τις ἄλλος ἀνέγραψεν.

The most immediate sense of

ὅστις ἱκανὸς ὑπὲρ τῶν τηλικούτων τεκμηριῶσαι.

(LSJ⁹ s.v. I.1). relates to age

19. Cf. Brunt (1976–83: II 494–95).

20. Bosworth (1995: 103–5); Baynham (2001: 122). The possibility of an actual visit in Hyrkania by a local queen was raised by Lane Fox (1973: 276).

21. Diodorus 2.32.4. Plutarch (*Artax.* 13), relying on Ktesias’s own work, says that he was one of the companions of King Artaxerxes II in the war against Cyrus. Be that as it may, his tenure as court physician allowed him to gather much information about Persian history, which he put down in a voluminous history, now unfortunately lost. For the remains of this work, with commentary and French

translation, see Lenfant (2004).

22. Diodorus 2.34.3 (the continuation of Ktesias's story, beginning at 32.5):
καθόλου μὲν

οὐν τὸ ἔθνος τοῦτο γυναῖκας ἀλκίμους ἔχειν καὶ κοινωνούσας τοῖς ἀνδράσι τῶν ἐν τοῖς
πολέμοις κινδύνων.

23. Herodotus 1.205–14. Herodotus' story reads more like a folk tale than a historical account. Still, there seems no reason to doubt that a Queen Tomyris did exist, and that she was at some point victorious against Cyrus's army.

24. A meeting with female warriors in Hyrkania is not mentioned by Arrian. It would be dangerous to interpret his silence: there are certainly many other details in the campaigns of Alexander that did not enter his narrative. One obvious and relevant example is Arrian's omission of Alexander's orientalism, which, in the vulgate sources, comes directly after the visit of the Amazon Queen. Of the vulgate authors we should not expect such a notice; any such meeting as did take place was taken over by the story of the Amazon Queen we now possess.

25. Arrian 3.19.2 to 3.25.1.

26. *Alex.* 50.8. see also Bosworth (1996: 99 f.), who fleshes out admirably some conjectured *realia* of Alexander's camp.

27. See also Arrian 4.8.1 f.

28. *Pace Mederer* (1936: 84), who claimed that the story originated from either One-sikritos or Polykleitos, and was borrowed by Kleitarchos, whence to the so-called vulgate authors; Tarn (1948: II 328), who gives the same opinion but fails to credit Mederer at this point; and Hammond (1981: 177; with 1983: 59, 112, 135–36), who ascribes the story entirely to Kleitarchos, but does not offer any possible events on the campaign which may have inspired its fabrication. Since all we have of the first generation histories that has survived is a handful of scattered fragments, the discussion by the aforementioned scholars often amounts to a set of equations far outnumbered by their variables.

29. Plutarch, *Alex.* 46.4–5. It is not clear from his narrative whether the work was read out by Onesikritos himself, and whether it was being read for the first time. Goukowsky (1978–81: I 203) interprets Lysimachos's stony smile as repressed anger: it was a good story, and he wanted to be in it! Mr. Nart Abrek, a freshman in my “Hellenism” class, recently suggested reading the grin as nostalgic yearning for a lost opportunity—Lysimachos the young officer somehow missed the encounter with these fascinating women; years later and already king, he still wished he hadn't.

30. So Apollodoros *Bibl.* 2.5.9. In the version of Diodorus (4.16) there is no initial friendly stage; the bloodbath starts straightway, with a detailed list of Amazons and their respective deaths.

31. For sources and discussion of Penthesileia's story see Blok (1995: 195–288).

32. Dowden (1997: 122–24 *et passim*; the quotation from p. 122); also Blok (1995:434 ff. *et passim*).

33. In a different context (indeed, in another part of his book) Troilus told of the destruction of the Amazons after the meeting of Alexander and the Queen (Justin 2.4.33). This story comes, in all likelihood, from a later tradition. The clue is supplied by a variant name of the Queen—Minythyia (cf. Orosius 3.18.5, who has Minothea and Halestris). This name, which could be rendered ‘Diminished,’ indicates that it was chosen specifically for the purpose of recounting the demise of the Amazon nation. The *LGP*, not surprisingly, has no record of a similar name, nor even of a name from the same root. since this specific Amazon Queen was surely invented for the purpose of our story (she does not appear elsewhere in literature), and since there is not a hint of her impending doom in the Alexander histories (quite

the opposite), we may conclude that the sequel is a later offshoot from the Alexander story. The choice of names seems to be deliberate: Minythia, 'Diminished,' is the opposite of Thalestris, 'Blooming' or 'Abundant' (presumably

from the root $\Theta\Lambda\lambda$, as in $\Theta\Lambda\lambda$, as in $\theta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omega$, $\theta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\iota\alpha$; in the various sources the Queen's name ends with either *-ia* or *-is*, and is given with either one or

two lambdas). As for Μινύθουια ,¹ the first two short syllables render her name suitable for hexameter verse.

34. Carlier (1979: 381,399–401); Tyrrell (1984: ch. 1, especially pp. 9 ff.); Hall (1989: 53).

35. 239a–d, trans. R. G. Bury (Loeb).

36. 66–68, trans. G. Norlin (Loeb).

37. Arrian 3.18.12. It matters little whether the burning of the Persepolis palace was indeed a premeditated act, as we read in Arrian. What matters is the fact that this argument could be, and indeed was made. The variant tradition, that the burning of the palace was the outcome of intoxicated revelry (Diodorus 17.72, Curtius 5.7 and Plutarch, *Alex.* 38) maintains the Athenian connection: the Athenian *hetaira* Thais plays an important role in all three accounts. The notion that Persepolis was burned as revenge for the treatment of Athens at the hands of Xerxes finds its clearest elucidation in the remark of Diodorus, "It was most remarkable that the impious act of Xerxes, king of the Persians, against the acropolis at Athens should have been repaid in kind after many years by one woman, a citizen of the land which had suffered it, and in sport" (72.6, trans. C. B. Welles, Loeb).

38. The Macedonian soldiers were quick to understand this. They thought the war was over and their minds were bent on home (Diodorus 17.74.3–5; Justin 12.3.2–3; Curtius 6.2.6–3.18; Plutarch, *Alex.* 47.1–4). The passage to India was accomplished with the help of Iranian, as well as European troops.

39. The Amazons did not long enjoy this friendly status. The famous dedication of Attalos in Athens included scenes from the war against the Giants of Thrace and Pellene, the war between the Athenians and the Amazons, the battle of Marathon and his own victory against the Gauls in Mysia (Pausanias 1.25.2). Attalos added a chapter of his own to the history of epic battles between Greece and the Barbarian. While doing so, he restored the Amazons to their old role.

40. Diodorus 17.77.4–78.1; Curtius 6.6.1–11; Justin 12.3.8–4.2. The friends were asked to dress in Persian attire, the soldiery encouraged to take foreign women. All received gifts and bounty.

41. Most clearly in Diodorus 17.77.4:
 $\mu\epsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}\ \delta\epsilon\ \tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha\ \delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha\varsigma\ \eta\delta\eta\ \kappa\epsilon\kappa\rho\alpha\tau\eta\kappa\acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\iota\ \tau\eta\varsigma$
 $\epsilon\pi\iota\beta\omicron\lambda\eta\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\eta\nu\ \beta\alpha\sigma\iota\lambda\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\delta\eta\eta\rho\iota\tau\omicron\nu\ \epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota\nu\ \eta\rho\acute{\epsilon}\alpha\tau\omicron\ \zeta\eta\lambda\omicron\upsilon\nu\ \tau\eta\nu\ \text{Περσικ}\acute{\eta}\nu\ \tau\rho\upsilon\phi\eta\nu\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\eta\nu$
 $\pi\omicron\lambda\upsilon\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\alpha\nu\ \tau\omicron\nu\nu\ \text{Ἀσιαν}\acute{\omega}\nu\ \beta\alpha\sigma\iota\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\omega\nu.$

42. Arrian 3.25.3; Curtius 6.6.13.

43. *Alex.* 45.1–3, 47.5–8. The information about Alexander's mixed dress, taking elements from both Macedonian and Persian fashions, but avoiding altogether some particularly uncouth Median items, derives from Eratosthenes (Plutarch, *Mor.* 329f–330a).

44. Arrian 7.12.2; Justin 12.4.2–11.

45. Curtius 8.4.23–30, especially 25: *ad stabiliendum regnum pertinere Persas et Macedones conubio iungi; hoc uno modo et pudorem victis et superbiam victoribus detrahi posse.* Plutarch, *Alex.* 47.7–8, reports the marriage with Roxane in his chapters on Alexander's orientalism, well outside its chronological order, and following directly after his reference to the Amazon Queen. He, too, stresses the importance of this

marriage in fostering cooperation with the conquered population.

46. Arrian 7.4.4–8; Diodorus 17.107.6; Plutarch, *Alex.* 70. The contents list to Diodorus's book 17 states that such marriages already took place concurrently with Alexander and Roxane's (the text itself is lost). According to Curtius (10.3.11–14) Alexander made the same connection in his speech at Opis: *Ergo ipse Oxyartis Persae filiam mecum matrimonio iunxi, non dedignatus ex captiva liberos tollere...proximisque amicorum auctor fui ex captivis generandi liberos, ut hoc sacro foedere omne discrimen victi et victoris excluderem.* Cf. Justin 12.12.1–2, in a special address to the Persians in Alexander's service: *ad finitibus conubiorum victos victoribus miscuisse.*

47. Diodorus 18.4.4.

6. POST MORTEM

1. *Nec devictae gentes fidem nuntio habuerunt, quod ut invictum regem, ita immortalem esse crediderant, recordantes quotiens praesenti morte ereptus esset, quam saepe pro amisso repente se non sospitem tantum suis, verum etiam victorem obtulisset* (Justin 13.1.2–3). This is, of course, rhetoric by Trogus (or Justin), but it surely represents what many people felt and thought at the time. Trogus may have found the description in one of his sources; any of the plentiful biographies and histories of Alexander may have offered a similar passage.

2. Arrian 4.8.3.

3. see Assman (1997).

4. Diodorus 17.117.3; Curtius 10.5.4, 6.16–18; Justin 12.15.12.

5. The sources for the events in Babylon are Diodorus 18.2–3; Curtius 10.6.1–10.13; Justin 13.1–4; Arrian, *Events after Alexander* 1–2 (= Roos, Teubner ed. of Arrian's *Scripta Minora*, frag. 1.1–8, pp. 253–58; Goralski 1989: 84–87). For analysis, reconstruction and earlier bibliography see Bosworth (2002: 27–63; quotation from p. 32).

6. Tarn (1921: 25 n. 18) assumed that the details given here by Curtius were in fact inspired by the deeds of Eumenes. But his assertion is uneconomical and makes little sense. As we shall see, Eumenes added his own touch to Perdikkas's straightforward message, which is completely missing from Curtius's account. Furthermore, why assume that Perdikkas could not think of these measures himself?

7. 10.6.6: *ceterum quamquam nulla clades huic qua affecti sumus par ab iratis dis excogitari potest, tamen magnitudinem rerum quas egit intuentibus credere licet, tantum virum deos accommodasse rebus humanis, quarum sorte completa, cito repeterent eum suae stirpi.*

8. The same notion was expressed explicitly by Plutarch, as we shall see in Chapter 8.

9. 10.6.7: *nihil aliud ex eo superest quam quod semper ab immortalitate seducitur.*

10. Violent outbreak: Curtius 10.7.16–19; Arrhidaios: 10.8.18.

11. According to Aelian *VH* 12.64 the body remained thus for no less than thirty days!

12. An amusing counterpoint to the miracle story of Alexander's corpse is reported by Plutarch *Phoc.* 22: when news of Alexander's death reached Athens, some hotheads started agitating for immediate revolt against Macedonia. The orator Demades replied that Alexander was surely still alive, for had he died the stench of his corpse would fill the entire world.

It has been suggested to me by one of the anonymous readers that Alexander was not in fact dead, merely in a state of coma; this would explain why the embalmers hesitated to touch his body. If so, the most pressing question would now be: who pressed the embalmers to proceed? This person would thus be Alexander's

executioner. Be that as it may, a self-preserving body would serve even better than a made-up story to enhance Alexander's superhuman status.

13. Diodorus 18.4.1–6. Concerning the 'last plans' and the burial plans of Alexander's body I follow the historical reconstruction of Badian (1968), with its salutary approach of trusting the sources, unless they offer good reason for doubt (as opposed to the tendency, denounced by the same author, to dissect a story to death and lose much valuable information in the process; see especially his p. 189).

14. Badian (1968: 201). For further discussion and bibliography on this vexed problem see O'Brien (1992: 318–20); Bosworth (2002: 59–60).

15. Diodorus 18.4.4. Cf. Curtius 10.1.17–19, who continues the return route across the Ebro and over the Alps, down to Italy and thence to Epirus.

16. Bosworth (2002: 59–60) argues on the basis of Diodorus 18.4.1 that at least the plan for a western campaign was real enough, and that at the time of Alexander's death preparations were already under way. If so, it would prove conclusively that Alexander mapped out the rest of his career according to the precedents set by Herakles.

17. 18.4.5. It is also possible that the monument was to be about the size of the great pyramid, but of a different shape. This depends on our understanding of

παρὰ πλῆσιον, as referring to shape or size.

18. Diodorus 18.3.5; 28.3. Curtius 10.5.4. Once again, I accept Badian's view, that "we need not doubt the last wish of the dying King" (1968: 187). The objection raised by Schachermeyr (1954: 122–23) and reiterated by Billows (1990: 61), that this piece of information is unreliable on the grounds that it derives from a source favorable to Ptolemy, should be rejected for a variety of reasons. First, the source analysis of the beginning of Diodorus's book 18 (a popular topic) neglects as a rule to contend with the evidence in Curtius, which corroborates Diodorus's report. Second, the assignment of Arrhidaïos to escort the body to Ammon, appearing as it does at the very end of the list of appointments to the various satrapies, shows absolutely no traces of Ptolemaic bias. Later passages, which do show such bias (*infra*) need not have come from the same source as the satrapies-list. Further, Pausanias (1.6.3), commonly cited to refute Alexander's wish to be buried in Siwah, says nothing at all about the issue. What he does say is that the escort was ordered

ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος, §3. The marching orders were given long after the King's death and regardless of his last wishes; cf. Errington (1970: 65); Hölbl (2001: 15).

Admittedly, one cannot but accept Ptolemaic bias in one of Diodorus's sources: the story of Ptolemy's abduction of the body and the adjacent encomium (18.28.2–6) leave no room for doubt. Yet the passage reveals more: the orders of Perdikkas that the body be sent to Aigai are not mentioned, nor its detention for some time in Memphis—both damning details. The whole piece reads, in fact, rather as an apology (by way of omission) for Ptolemy's behavior, having disobeyed *both* the orders of Perdikkas *and* the last wishes of Alexander. (The late King wanted to be buried at Siwah, while Ptolemy eventually laid him to final rest in Alexandria; Diodorus even adds that the disobedience to Alexander's last orders was to be a

ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος, §3. temporary measure: §3). The fact that Diodorus's source (or his source's source) felt obliged to defend Ptolemy's reputation, and the mention of Alexander's intention to be buried at Siwah in this apologetic piece, corroborate the historicity of this intention. Otherwise, why include this allegedly false and patently damning assertion?

19. One almost wants the 'last plans' to be an invention. A forgery would be even more telling than an authentic document in this case, implying that Perdikkas (or an

accomplish) chose to strike these particular chords in order to gain credibility among his listeners.

20. Diodorus 18.3.5, 26–28; Strabo 17.1.8; Curtius 10.5.4, 10.20; Pausanias 1.6.3; Arrian *Affairs after Alexander*, frag. 1.25 (Roos; p. 262); Aelian, *VH* 12.64. On Alexander's tomb in general see Chugg (2004); Saunders (2006).

21. Arrian, *Affairs after Alexander*, at the beginning of the Vatican Codex (= *FGrH* 156 10A.1).

22. The case is stated by Schubert (1914: 180–81). For the emphasis on prestige and status see also Bevan (1968: 19); Errington (1970: 65); Hölbl (2001: 15).

23. Alexander was awarded specifically Heroic honors in his last resting place; Diodorus 18.28.4.

24. Dillery (2004) has demonstrated that the body of Alexander could also be viewed by nationalistic Egyptians as bound to produce harmful effects. Magic certainly has its dark side.

25. 10.10.11: *traditum magis quam creditum refero*.

26. 1.66–68, paraphrased and abridged.

27. Plutarch, *Thes.* 36; *Cim.* 8. It has been suggested that the oracle was given in the context of the reforms by Kleisthenes. Theseus, the mythical *synoikistes* of Attica, was invoked to ratify the new political reforms (Blamire 1989: 119 f.).

28. Lines 1518 ff..

29. *Strat.* 6.53.

30. Considering that Alexander's body was indeed originally stationed in Memphis, this story may represent the dissatisfaction of the Memphitai with its removal.

31. On Greek founder cult see Malkin (1987: 17–91, 189–266).

32. The special connection of Alexander with Egyptian Alexandria is stressed by Ps. Libanios (*Progygnasmata* 12.27) *à propos* the equestrian statue of Alexander the Founder, some seven centuries or more after the city's foundation. For text, translation and bibliography see Stewart (1993: 397–400).

33. 18.28.4:

κατεσκεύασεν οὖν τέμενος κατὰ τὸ μέγεθος καὶ κατὰ τὴν κατασκευὴν
τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρου δόξης ἄξιον. ἐν ᾧ κηδεύσας αὐτὸν καὶ θυσίαις ἥρωικαῖς καὶ ἀγῶσι
μεγαλοπρεπέσι τιμῆσας, οὐ πρὸς ἀνθρώπων μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ παρὰ θεῶν καλὰς ἀμοιβὰς
ἔλαβεν.

34. For these coins see Mørkholm (1991: 63–67, pl. 90–95); Stewart (1993: 231–43, 434–35); Arnold-Biucchi (2006: 60–61); Lorber 2005; Dahmen (2007: 10–15, 42, 112–15).

35. Dahmen (2007: 68 note 13).

36. On the small quantity and limited circulation of the entire issue which followed the battle of the Hydaspes see Holt (2003: 140–41, 147).

37. After Ptolemy's coronation in 305/4 he started minting new silver coinage, featuring his own face. The elephant-scalped Alexander continued on Egyptian bronze coinage well into the mid-third century.

38. Stewart (1993: 235).

39. The reverse sides of Ptolemy's new coins display a sitting Zeus, familiar from the regular Alexander coinage, and an armed Athena, defending with her shield the Ptolemaic eagle. Taken together with Herakles-like Alexander, the new currency preserves the same Divine troika employed by Alexander on his own coinage. The motif of Alexander and the elephant scalp was used, to a lesser extent, also by Agathokles of Syracuse and Seleukos I (Stewart 1993: 266–69; Dahmen 2007: 116–18).

40. Diodorus 18.60.1–61.3; Plutarch *Eum.* 13; Nepos, *Eum.* 7; Polyainos, *Strat.* 4.8.2.

41. It is nearly certain that the source for the incident was the officer and historian Hieronymos of Kardia, who was a close friend of Eumenes. He will have been familiar with the story, probably from Eumenes' own mouth; he may even have been present himself in some such séance sessions.

42. The ceremony in the Royal Tent was an ongoing affair. Note the repetitive use of the imperfect describing the reactions of the commanders to Eumenes'

ἐπέθουν,

arrangement:

προσεκύνουν, ἐκάθιζον, ἐβουλεύοντο, ἐπληροῦντο (Diodorus 18.61.1–3).

43. Plutarch, *Demet.* 29.1.

44. Hadley connects the story with Antigonid coinage from 306, bearing the images of Zeus and Nikē (1974: 59 notes 56–57). If his reconstruction is correct and the association of these two deities with the Antigonids was a matter of common knowledge, the story may indeed be allied propaganda, deriving from the camp of Seleukos, Lysimachos, or both.

45. Hadley (1974: 56f.).

46. For the confusing message sent by the Poros Medallion concerning the relation of Zeus and Alexander on the battlefield see Holt (2003: 152).

47. Fraser (1996: 36–39) conjectures the existence of a “*Seleucus-Romance*,” which stood as a counterpart to the Ptolemaic origins of the *Alexander-Romance*.

48. Diodorus 19.90.1; Appian *Syr.* 54.

49. Diodorus 19.90.3–5 gives Seleukos's words in indirect speech. The use of the first person plural seems to me justified by the next sentence in §5:

§5: ἐπολιτεύετο δὲ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς
συστρατεύοντας καὶ κατεσκεύαζεν αὐτὸν ἴσον ἅπασιν.

50. Note the use of

θαυμαζόμενα and παρ' ἀνθρώποις θαυμαζόμενα in Diodorus's account.

51. For Alexander's σύνεσις (intelligence), albeit from a late source, cf. Plutarch *Mor.* 327e, 332c, 343a.

52. Strabo 17.1.43.

53. ἐν μὲν γὰρ Βραγχίдайς αὐτοῦ χρηστηαζομένου (Diodorus 19.90.4). Appian clearly ascribes this consultation to Alexander' lifetime:

στρατιώτῃ τοῦ βασιλέως ἔτι ὄντι (Syr. 56). seleukos may have visited Didyma in 313, when he was sent, as admiral of Ptolemy's fleet in the Ionian sea, to assist the satrap of Karia. It is also possible that during this visit seleukos received the idea for the prophecy he related to his men a year later. That the oracle's pronouncement of seleukos as King was probably the latter's invention seems likely enough. In 334, when the consultation was supposed to have taken place, the oracle was probably still inactive (Fontenrose 1988: 94, 216–17). Epigraphic evidence from the oracle at Didyma resumes from 300/299 onwards (Parke 1985b: 47).

54. Whether this was supposed to take place at the same time as the prophecy, or at some later date, is impossible to tell from Diodorus's narrative. Unlike the oracle, such a dream is quite likely to have occurred to Seleukos. On the verge of a great adventure, a comforting and reassuring dream featuring Alexander will have

been all too natural for a man of high self-confidence.

55. Compare *παρὰ πᾶσι θαυμαζόμενα*, concerning the deeds of Alexander

(19.90.3) with *παρ' ἀνθρώποις θαυμαζόμενα*, relating to the future endeavors of Seleukos and company (§5). The repetition cannot be coincidental.

56. Arrian 7.22.2–5; Appian, *Syr.* 56.

57. Appian, *Syr.* 56; Justin 15.4.2–9. This is, as far as I know, the only connection between Apollo and the sign of the anchor. More on the mystery of the anchor below.

58. see Hadley (1969), referring also to earlier scholarship. His argument is laden with difficulties: the “reasonable expectation” (p. 147) that Hieronymos should have included a catalogue of prophecies about seleukos is based merely on a casual remark in Diodorus; the three comparisons (*ibid.*) made to prove the former point mostly show dissimilarities rather than points of agreement (except in the most obvious places necessitated by elementary facts, rather than by a common source); the assumption that some *logoi* are later, more developed versions of other *logoi* (p. 151) is unfounded, since in fact they could well be different parts of a whole, contemporaneous *logos*. Nothing compels us to think that Diodorus and Appian (or Hieronymos, for that matter) told us at any given point in their narrative absolutely everything they knew of each story. It is quite natural for any author to select and reconstruct, not merely copy.

A more general problem with the attempts of *Quellenforscher* to analyze the sources for the history of the Successors is the ubiquitous propensity to ascribe details to Hieronymos of Kardia, and to treat this writer as omniscient and ever-truthful. One imagines that if we should ever be so lucky as to discover a copy of Hieronymos, his text would yield multiple errors, inconsistencies and misjudgments, which source-critics would then be only too happy to pursue. In reality, we can expect our second-hand sources to have used more varied material in writing their narratives. The pro-Ptolemaic source mentioned above (n. 18) may serve as an example. In that case, the presence of our mysterious source is given away by inordinate praise of Ptolemy. Can we be sure that other anonymous writers did not inject the narratives we now possess with other (more subtle?) biases, which we now lack the perspective to recognize?

59. The detail of the lost ring also belongs, in all likelihood, to 312 or shortly thereafter, as it focuses on Seleukos's realm on the banks of the Euphrates, that is, in Babylon. This fits the context of 312. In any case, it makes sense for the story to have started circulating before the removal of influence to the four-city complex in north-western Syria (unless, as seems to me less likely, it represents Babylonian propaganda, in which case it would fit better *after* the foundation of Syrian Antioch and her sister-cities).

60. Cf. Antigonos's misstep when coming out of his tent just before joining battle at Ipsos (Plutarch, *Demet.* 29.2); cf. also Tiberius Gracchus's infelicitous foot injury on his way to his final *comitium* (Plutarch *Ti. Gracch.* 17).

61. For the shape of Seleukos's anchor, quite similar to the modern-day admiralty anchor, see Mörholm (1991: plates 141,149), with Wirgin (1961) for ancient precedents. Mehl (1986: 6, 99) took the connection of the anchor with Apollo's paternity to be a literary fiction by Trogus, which strikes me as unlikely.

62. For Seleukos's age see Grainger (1990: 1 f.). Antiochos II, the second son of Antiochos I, was born in 286. For the birth dates of the Seleucid kings see Eusebius, *Chronikon* (ed. Schoene) 1.249–51.

63. *τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι τῷ ἀρχηγ[ῶ] τοῦ γένος αὐτοῦ* (OGIS 219, line 27). Later generations of the Seleucid royal house kept alive their origin-myth (see

64.

ὕμνεϊτ(ε) ἐπὶ σπονδαῖς Ἀπόλλωνος κυανοπλοκάμο[υ] | παῖδα Σέλευκον ὃν αὐτὸς
 γείνατο χρ[υσολύρα] | [. . .] εἰ [. . .] διαθεσ [. . .] (Insch. Eryth.
 205, lines 74–76). The editors give a more generous reading of the text; the reading
 offered above is based on autopsy. I should like to thank Dr. Klaus Hallof of the
Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften for making his squeezes of the
 stone available to me.

65. Traditionally, this part of the inscription was dated to the period between
 Koroupedion and Seleukos's assassination (see bibliography in *Insch. Eryth.* p. 341).
 The *terminus post quem* makes sense (it would be surprising for cities under the rule
 of Lysimachos to heap such praise on Seleukos); less so the *terminus ante quem*: there
 is no reason why the hymn could not have been composed and inscribed after the
 death of its subject.

66. Pindar, *Pyth.* 3; Hesiod, cited in a *scholion* on Pindar's ode (frag. 60;
Fragmenta Hesiodica, edd. Merkelbach and West, [Oxford, 1967]).

67. We should also note Seleukos's act of piety towards Apollo—the return of the
 God's statue to the Milesians. This statue had formerly been removed by Xerxes and
 deposited at Ekbatana. Seleukos returned it to Branchidai (Pausanias 1.16.3; 8.46.3).
 It is also possible that Seleukos's strong affinity with Apollo was intended to resonate
 with Euripides' connection of the God to the Argead house (Hyginus *Fab.* 219;
 Harder 1985: 123–272). such a connection could serve as a source of legitimacy for
 the ascendant seleukids.

68. ἐκέλευεν ἄξια φρονεῖν τῆς γενέσεως; Plutarch *Alex.* 3.3, on the
 authority of Eratosthenes.

69. Athenaios 11.474f, 781c, on the authority of Pherekydes and Herodoros of
 Herakleia.

70. *Ubi, post mortem Alexandri, occupato regno Orientis, urbem condidit, ibi quoque
 geminae originis memoriam consecravit. Nam et urbem ex Antioch patris nomine
 Antiochiam vocavit et campos vicinos urbi Apollini dicavit.* 15.4.7–8.

71. We cannot, of course, assert that Seleukos had a laid-out plan to that effect.
 The possibility even exists that the element of Divine Sonship was introduced only
 after his death. Yet some of the initiative certainly came from Seleukos himself (the
 dream about Alexander, to be sure). We must also make room for flattery (or mere
 enthusiasm) by his friends, for the natural desire of the soldiers—many used to be
 Alexander's—to see in their leader a Heroic figure, and for lucky coincidences. These
 usually provide the needed cement to nascent myths.

72. As we have seen from the example of Nikostratos (chapter 4; Diodorus
 16.44.3), self-identification with Herakles was not an invention of Alexander. This
 phenomenon became a common trope in the Hellenistic period (and later),
 especially in the field of philosophy. The most prominent example was that of
 Kleanthes, the leader of the stoics in the middle of the third century B.C. According
 to Diogenes Laertius (7.170) the philosopher, who throughout his life was engaged
 in manual labor in order to support himself, refusing gifts which would have
 allowed him relative leisure and more time for philosophy, received recognition as a
 “second Herakles.” Cato Uticensis was described by Seneca as greater than Herakles
 (*De Constantia* 2.1). For the popularity of Herakles as a paragon of proper behavior
 among philosophers see Frischer (1982: 214–16); Padilla (1998: 47 n. 75).

73. How much this custom owes to Alexander is obvious from a mere glance at
 the table of contents in Habicht (1956), the primary work on the subject.

74. For Ptolemaic ruler cults see Fraser (1972: I 213–46 with notes in II 361–97). see also Taylor (1927) on Alexander's cult in Alexandria.

75. On Seleukid Divinity see Habicht (1956: 82–108); Sherwin-White and Kuhrt (1993: 116–18, 202–10).

76. Aratos: Pausanias 4.14.7–8.

77. Gellius 6.1.1–5. Yet both Hannibal and Scipio knew that Alexander was the greatest general of the three (Livius, *Per.* 35.14).

78. Another fascinating case is that of Aristomenes the Messenian, leader of his nation in its revolt from Sparta in the early seventh century (for his exploits see Diodorus 15.66.34 and in detail Pausanias 4.14 ff.). Aristomenes was worshipped in Messenia as a Hero down to Pausanias's own time. The birth of this great war leader for a tragic, hopeless cause, his Messenian followers asserted, happened to be somewhat of an epiphany: “for they say that a *Daimon* or a God had came to his

mother Nikoteleia in the shape of a serpent” Νικοτελεία
γὰρ τῇ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ δαίμονα ἢ θεὸν δράκοντι εἰκασμένον συγγενέσθαι λέγουσι;
Pausanias 4.14.7). Aristomenes lived some three and a half centuries before Alexander, Pausanias five centuries after his death. since Pausanias did not disclose what sources he used for his Messenian narrative, and the story of Aristomenes may well have been recounted by Pausanias's Messenian contemporaries (he witnessed the worship of the Hero), it is impossible to tell whether the story originated before or after Alexander's time.

79. The list includes Alexander of Megalopolis, Philippos V, Alexander I Balas, Diodotos Tryphon, Alexander II Zabinas and Mithridates Vi Eupator. For a detailed study see Bohm (1989).

80. On Alexander's tomb see Erskine (2002); Chugg (2004); Saunders (2006).

81. Suetonius, *Div. Iul.* 7; cf. Plutarch, *Caes.* 11, where Caesar meditates on a history of Alexander.

82. Suetonius, *Div. Iul.* 88; DiO 47.18; with syne (1939: 202).

83. For the development of Octavian-Augustus's official nomenclature see Syne (1939: 527–28).

84. Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 18.1; Dio 51.16.4–5. According to Dio, Octavian offered his respect for Alexander as one reason for his decision not to punish the city of Alexandria.

85. Pliny, *NH* 37.10; Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 50.

86. Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 94.4; Dio 45.1.2–3. Grandet (1986). For Augustus and Alexander in general see Kienast (1969).

7. ALEXANDER AND THE END OF DAYS

1. For a preliminary survey of Alexander's appearances in Jewish literature up to and including the Talmudic era, see Lévi (1883), and other works by the same author, published regularly in the *Revue des Études Juives* and listed in schürer (1973–86: I 138 n. 1). see also stoneman (1994) including some medieval works; Amitay (2006; 2007: 237–40). For the major medieval Hebrew texts featuring Alexander see Dan (1969); Flusser (1978: I 54–60, 373–74, 461–84); see also Kazis (1962).

2. BJ 7.244–251, my italics.

3. Suetonius, *Nero* 19.2; Tacitus *Hist.* 1.6.2. Tacitus calls the enemy *Albani*, but this has long been recognized as a mistake for *Alani*: see Anderson (1928b: 146 with note 1) with earlier bibliography; the current *communis opinio* concurs: Grant (1970: 235), Cizek (1982: 343), Griffin (1984: 228–29).

4.

11.5.4:

Κλειτάρχος δέ φησι τὴν Θαληστρίαν ἀπὸ Κασπίων πυλῶν καὶ Θερμῶδοντος ὀρμηθεῖσαν ἐλθεῖν πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον, εἰσι δ' ἀπὸ Κασπίας εἰς Θερμῶδοντα στάδιοι πλείους

ἑξακισχιλίων.

Interestingly, the *epsilon* recension of the *Romance* puts Alexander's Caucasian campaign immediately after the epistolary exchange with the Amazons (38–39). For the history of this branch of the *Romance*, the oldest containing Alexander's fortification of the Caspian Gates, see Trumpf (1974: *praefatio*); Jouanno (2002: 339–440).

5. On the various “Caspian Gates” and their association with Alexander see Anderson (1928b). However, his assertion that the name became attached to the Dariel pass only during the eastern campaign of Corbulo is contradicted by Kleitarchos's testimony, treated above, which he himself cites (pp. 139–40). see also Stoneman (1994: 99–105) for an explanation of Alexander's geography, including the Gates and the Amazons.

6. Descendant of Alexander: Justin 38.7.1; McGing (1986: 13 n. 2, 38, 95, 161). Perseus: Lane Fox (1973: 201), McGing (1986: 97–99). Dionysos and Herakles: Appian, *Mith.* 113; McGing (1986: 99–102). Inn: Appian, *Mith.* 20. Apameia: Strabo 12.8.18. Ephesos: Strabo 14.1.23. For detailed treatment of Alexander imitation by Mithridates, with special emphasis on numismatics, see Böhm (1989: 153–91).

7. McGing (1986: 50–52).

8. Justin 38.7.1–3; 37.3.2.

9. If a certain sculpture of Herakles in the Louvre is indeed part of a group portraying the Hero as battling Zeus's eagle to save Prometheus, and if this Herakles be identified as Mithridates (for all of which see McGing 1986: 99–100), it may forge an even closer connection between Alexander, Mithridates and the Caucasus.

10. Friends: Sallust, *Hist.* 3.88; Plutarch, *Pomp.* 2. *Magnus*: Plutarch, *Pomp.* 13; Pliny *NH* 7.96. Hercules and Pater Liber: Pliny *NH* 7.95.

11. Appian, *Mith.* 117. For further examples of Pompey's identification with Alexander see Gruen (1998b: 183–86), who shows that in Rome the allusion to Alexander had its disadvantages as well.

12. Plutarch, *Pomp.* 35.

13. Germanicus in the East: Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.53–61, 69–73. For Tacitus's comparison of Germanicus with Alexander see Gissel (2001).

14. There, in ancient inscriptions, he read about the glorious campaigns of King Ramses, who had subjugated to Egypt every nation from Libya to Bactria and from Ethiopia to the Skythians (*Ann.* 2.60). In carrying Ramses far beyond the boundaries of any historical Pharaoh, the ecumenical nature of these claims betrays strong Alexandresque influence.

15. Anderson (1928b: 146).

16. Herodotus 1.103–6. For the question of dates see Sulimirski and Taylor in the *CAH*², vol. III 2, 567, with further bibliography.

17. Magog, son of Japheth: *Genesis* 10:2. His identification with the Skythians: Josephus

AJ

1.123:

Μαγῶν γὰρ δὲ τοὺς ἀπ' αὐτοῦ Μαγῶν γὰρ ὄνομα θέντας ᾤκισεν, Σκύθας δὲ ὑπ' αὐτῶν

[sc. Ἑλληνῶν] προσαγορευομένους.

see also Pfister (1915); and with more detail, Anderson (1932: 8 and n. 2; 19–20).

18. This branch includes the *ε* and *γ* recensions of the *Romance*: *ε* 39.4 ff. (= Trumpf 1974: 144 ff.); *γ* 3.26a (Parthe 1969: 402 ff.). The story appears also in Pseudo-Methodius [8] 10: (= Aertsand Kortekaas 1998: 116–19); also Lolos (1976: 152f.). For a useful and accessible English translation (from *γ*) see Stoneman's Penguin edition of the *Romance*, a laudable contribution to the study of Alexander *mythicus* (1991: supplement J, 185 f.).

ἐπὶ γὰρ τῷ σῷ ὀνόματι καὶ θελήματι καὶ γὰρ ἐποίησα, ἃ ἠθέλησας, καὶ ἔδωκας ἐν χειρὶ μου τὸν συμπάντα κόσμον (γ 3.26a = Parthe 1969: 402 l. 15–404 l. 2).

20. Tacitus *Ann.* 6.33; Josephus *AJ* 18.97, who calls them Ἀλανοί.

21. In Ezekiel Gog is king of Magog; so also in the LXX. In the third *Sibylline Oracle* (319, 512) these seem to be two different people, or peoples. In *Revelation* 20:8 there is already no trace of the distinction between the land (or people) and its king.

22. After the arrival of the Goths on the stage of history, these two names are often given as Goth and Magoth. The first recorded instance of the identification of Gog as Goth is probably in st. Ambrosius's *De Fide ad Gratian.*, 2.16; 495; 138 (ed. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* XVI, 587–88). See Anderson (1932: 9 ff.) for further discussion, including the reaction of other Church Fathers to this identification. The Goths became a menace in the mid-third century c.E. since the surest explanation of “Magoth” is a reference to Magog, the connection between Alexander and Gog and Magog in the *Romance* must be older.

23. For the opinion that the composition of Ezekiel's prophecies about Gog was in fact inspired by Alexander the Great see Winckler (1898: 160–71 esp. 167Q).

24. Any discussion of the authorship and composition of Daniel far transcends the scope of this book. It had been identified as a Jewish work from the time of Antiochus IV as early as the third century C.E. by Porphyry (Casey 1976). It is widely accepted today that the book is indeed composite, and that its latest parts originated in the generation of the Maqabis. The Hebrew Bible version, as a coherent literary piece, probably derives from the following generation. See for example: Montgomery (1927: 96–99); Tcherikover (1959: 398–400); Ginsberg (1948: 29–38); Bickerman (1967:92,127); Delcor (1971:15–19); Hartman and Di Lella (1978: 9–18); Towner (1984: 5–8); Goldingay (1989: 326–27); Redditt (1999: 1–6, 194–96); Gowan (2001: 20–21); Davies (2001: 563); Collins (2001: 1–5).

25. For *Daniel* as history, and its treatment of the Hellenistic period in general and Alexander in particular, see Rappaport (1993a; 1993b).

26. In later times Alexander's kingdom was pushed to third place, while the fourth was reassigned first to Rome, and then to the Arab Caliphate. For this interpretative approach, especially of *Daniel* 2, see Josephus, *AJ* 10.276; Ibn-'Ezra on *Daniel* 2:39; Momigliano (1979).

27. Clearly recognized by *Seder 'Olam* Chapter 3 0. More on this fascinating piece of rabbinic historical writing presently. See also Rashi's commentary on *Daniel* 8:21.

28. For discussion and bibliography about this enormous shift in Jewish history see Urbach (1946); with particular interest in *Seder 'Olam*: Milikowsky (1994); sommer (1996).

29. see *Bavli Yevamot* 82b, *Bavli Nidah* 46b. Modern scholarship: Ratner (1894: 19–33); Milikowsky (1979–80: 246–63; 1981: 12–24).

30. *Seder 'Olam* 30. Biblical quotations (*in italics*) from *Daniel* 8:21, 11:3–4; *Proverbs* 22:17–19. In *your heart* translated after the LXX; in the MT: *in your stomach*.

31. For examples of practical prophecy in post-Alexander times see Urbach (1946: 3–8).

32. 14:38–49, quotation above from verse 41:

οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς εὐδόκησαν τοῦ

εἶναι αὐτῶν Σμῶνα ἡγούμενον καὶ ἀρχιερέα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἕως τοῦ ἀναστῆναι προφήτην

33. For this highly important and fascinating text see the remarkable edition of Noam (2003). *Megillat Ta'anit* has survived in two unique manuscripts, belonging to two distinct traditions. The Oxford manuscript represents the *Eretz-Israeli* tradition; the Parma manuscript the Babylonian. The scroll itself (text in italics), commemorating festive days in the Jewish calendar, was compiled in the last centuries of the second temple period. Both branches of the *scholion* to the scroll appear to be “random representatives of a group of *aggadic* compendia, attached to the scroll in *tannaitic* and *amoraic* times” (Noam 2003: 26). For a thorough discussion see pp. 19–27, 319–332 *et passim* in the commentary on various dates. This edition now replaces the outdated and faulty Lichtenstein (1931–32).

34. Noam (2003: 95–96) according to the Parma Ms.

35. For which questions see Noam (2003: 239–42), with earlier bibliography. A close scrutiny of these texts promises to yield interesting results.

36. For Elijah as settler of otherwise insoluble disputes see *Mishnah 'Eduyot* 8.7. According to the *Tosfot Yom Tov* of R. Yom-Tov Lippman Heller (1579–1654) *adloc.* the meaning of the word p'n, ubiquitous in rabbinic literature as the conclusion of an unsettled question, is *nrrm ni'Eip fin' 'bon*—The Tishbi (i.e., Elijah, *I Kings* 17:1) shall settle difficulties and dilemmas. Cf. also *Avot deRabiNatan* A 34, B 37; *BamidbarRaba* 3.13, ascribed already to the time of Ezra.

37. 3:23. For the rabbinic perception of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi as representing a distinct stage at the very end of the prophetic era see *Avot deRabi Natan* A1, B1.

38. *Matthew* 11:7–15 (citing *Malachi* 3:1); *Seder'Olam* 17; *Avot deRabi Natan* B38; *Bavli 'Eruvin* 43b.

39. The philological and historical discussion of the Hebrew (and Aramaic) texts of the Midrash of Ten Kings has far-reaching ramifications, too wide to enter here. A detailed study of this fascinating *Midrash* is now underway.

40. This phrase is the hallmark of the entire *Midrash*, and is otherwise quite common in rabbinic literature. It may have been inspired by *Daniel* 2:20.

41. *Pirqei deRabi Eli'ezer* 10 or 11 (in different Mss. and print editions). Biblical verse in *italics*. On the convoluted Ms. tradition of this work see Barth (1999). For reasons to be explained presently, I consider this to be the principal version of the *Midrash*.

42. *Daniel* 2:21.

43. *Genesis* 10:10.

44. *Genesis* 41:57.

45. *Exodus* 1:8. The reader will have noticed that the biblical snippets supplied as explanation and proof to the assertions made in the *Midrash* may fail *prima facie* to do so. In some cases the argument can be easily understood by putting the short quotation in context. such cases as remain baffling even in context, yet are not directly relevant to the discussion at hand, will be discussed in a future work.

46. *I Kings* 5:1; 10:25.

47. *I Kings* 18:10.

48. *I Kings* 20:15.

49. *Daniel* 2:38.

50. *Isaiah* 10:14.

51. *Ezra* 1:2, *II Chronicles* 36:23.

52. *Daniel* 8:5.

53. *Daniel* 11:4. Literally: “torn to the four winds.”

54. *Daniel* 2:35.

55. *Isaiah* 44:6; *Zechariah* 14:9; *Isaiah* 2:18; *Ezekiel* 34:15; *Isaiah* 52:8.
56. Targum Sheni appears in most editions of *Miqraot Gdolot*; see also Grossfeld (1991) and Ego (1996). The version ascribed to the now lost recension of *BereshitRabati* appears in the *Pugio Fidei* (2.10.5) of the Dominican priest Raymondus Martini, published some time after 1278 (here according to the 1687 print edition). *Aqtan deMarYa'aqov* published by Carmoli (1885) and mentioned by Ginzberg (2003: I 162 n. 82). Ms. De-Rossi 327 in Hurwitz (1881: 16–33,38–55).
57. Other suggested dates range between the fourth and the fourteenth centuries c.E. For the latest research see Grossfeld (1991: 19–24); Ego (1996: 21–25).
58. Zunz and Albeck (1947: 136); strack and stemberger (1991: 356–57). Unlike these two versions, both with ample Ms. testimony, the remaining three renditions derive from single manuscripts, and are little known even by the standards of this otherwise obscure *Midrash*.
59. It is tempting to identify this entity with the emperor Augustus, which would result in an attractive and accurate dating for this version. However, the title *Augustus* became a staple of the Roman emperor, and may not refer to any one person in particular.
60. There were also Ardashir II and III, who ruled the sassanid state in the late fourth and early seventh centuries c.E., respectively. However, their short, inglorious reigns preclude them as candidates for this list of famous world rulers.
61. Hurwitz (1881: 20, with notes to pages 52–53).
62. Even the rarest name on this list, the surprising Ahab, appears in no less than three out of five versions!
63. For the wide variety of Messianic possibilities and contexts see Klausner (1955: 248386); Aescoly (1987: I 37–74); Pomykala (1995: 231–64); Lenowitz (1998: 23–59); schäfer (1998); Wise (1999).
64. Diodorus 17.81.1–2; Curtius 7.3.1–3; Arrian 3.27.4–5.
65. The quotation is from Curtius 7.6.20. Wound: Arrian 4.3.3. Injuries sustained by Alexander in sieges usually spelled a very bad end for the besieged.
66. Arrian 6.24.1–3. semiramis, too, had attempted the perilous desert journey; she, too, with disastrous results. On her journey see sulimani (2005).
67. Arrian 6.29.4–11. see also Curtius 10.1.30.
68. Tacitus, *Ann.* 6.31: simul veteres Persarum ac Macedonum terminos seque invasurum possessa primum Cyro et post Alexandro per vaniloquentiam ac minas iaciebat.
69. Mor. 338f (= De Fort. 6):
μηδεὶς εἰς τὸν Κύρου θρόνον ἄλλος ἢ Ἀλέξανδρος καθίσειε.
70. *Vit. Cons.* 7–8.
71. *Isaiah* 44:26–45:4. *Italics* mine.
72. The role, or title, of shepherd is of paramount importance. Beside Cyrus, only one other figure in Jewish lore was both a shepherd and an Anointed—none other than David (I *Samuel* 16:11–13; on Alexander and David see Appendix I). A vivid example of the self-perception of the people of Judea as sheep and their rulers as shepherds can be seen in chapters 89–90 of *I Enoch*, a zoomorphic history of Israel down to the early days of the Maqabis. References to shepherds and sheep abound throughout the Bible. Interestingly, the LXX seems to follow a text which did not contain the shepherd motif at this point.
73. *AJ* 11.313–39. This story has engendered a vast amount of scholarship, focusing for the most part on the question of authenticity. For representative surveys see: schürer (1964 [1901]: 180–81 n. 1); Marcus (1937: VI, 512–13); schürer (1973–86: 138 n. 1); Momigliano (1979); Golan (1982: 29–30 n. 1); Gruen (1998a: 189–98).

74. While the full ramifications of this claim cannot be explored here and must remain for a future endeavor, one should notice that such a procedure does not seem to have been standard practice in Persia. The indices of the extensive surveys by Briant (2002; notice the title: *From Cyrus to Alexander*) and Wiesehöfer (1996) give no references to such oaths.

75. *Isaiah* 45:2; Josephus, *AJ* 11:334. Cf. the parallels in *Megillat Ta'anit* on Kislev 21st (= Noam 2003: 102, 265), *Bavli Yoma* 69a.

76. 45.1–2. More pointed still in the LXX rendering:
ἀνοίξω ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ θύρας καὶ
πόλεις οὐ συγκλεισθήσονται (45:1).

77. 45:3. Persian war chest captured in Damascus: Diodorus 17.32.3; Curtius 3.8.12, 12.27, 13.16; Plutarch *Alex.* 24.1; Arrian 2.11.10, 15.1.

78. In the *Romance* telling of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem he is even made to recognize the truth in the priests' claims concerning the sole status of the God of Israel, and proclaims Him his own: ? 20.4 (= Trumpf 1974: 78); ? 2.24 (= Engelmann 1963: 218). Cf. Alexander's prayer at the fortification of the Caspian Gates: ? 39.5 (= Trumpf 1974: 144–45); ? 3.26a/29 (= Parthe 1969: 402–4).

79. Chapter 3, pp. 15–16, ed. sachau, Leipzig 1876; cited by Aescoly (1987: I 143–44).

80. Which, in some circles, is still in use even today! (Rappaport 2004: 45).

81. The same is true of the non-Jewish sources. What would modern Alexander histories look like, if we had at our disposal full copies of Kallisthenes, Ptolemy, Aristoboulos, Kleitarchos and the rest?

82. Rappaport (1993a).

8. ALEXANDER AND JESUS

1. The poem by Charles Ross Weede, cited by Tawes (1945: 119–120) with permission of the poet.

2. Diodorus 6.1. According to Rusten (1982: 102–3) Euhemerism as a mode of interpretation existed already in the fifth century, but “its greatest popularity, however, begins in the decades following the death of Alexander.”

3. Plutarch *Alex.* 75 *fin.*; Arrian 7.28.1; samuel (1962: 46–47).

4. Which Lane Fox (1992: 33–34) calculates to Friday, March 30, 36 c.E., setting out the main difficulties and solutions for the question of Jesus' age.

5. Thus far, I have not been able to trace where, when and by whom the number thirty-three was first attached to Jesus. The coincidental proximity of ages with Alexander was noticed already by Michel de Montaigne, *Essais* I 20 (ed. Gallimard 1965: 145).

6. For a (very short) exposition on my use of the structuralist approach and of memetics see the Introduction.

7. For Davidic Messianism see *I Samuel* 16:13, *I Kings* 1:39; *Bavli Sanhedrin* 99a; Liver (1959), Pomykala (1995). Eusebius (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.7.17) tried unsuccessfully to argue that Mary also belonged to the house of David. This argument preserves Jesus' connection with Davidic aspirations, while pushing to the side the theologically problematic notion of double paternity.

8. Even more so the notion that the Messiah was not only a son of God but also a God in his own right: “the identification of a contemporary historical figure with God would have been inconceivable to a first-century c.E. Palestinian Jew. It could certainly not have been expressed in public, in the presence of men conditioned by centuries of biblical monotheistic religion...It was not until Gentiles began to preach the Jewish Gospel to the Hellenized peoples of the Roman empire that the hesitation

disappeared and the linguistic brake was lifted.” (Vermes 1973: 212–13).

9. *I Enoch* 6–11, where the Angels are called “sons of Heaven.”

10. *II Samuel* 7:14; *I Chronicles* 17:13,22:10.

11. *Bavli Baba Batra* 14b.

12. 'l ??' aim bal wl ꞑma '3a. Cf. the Greek of the LXX:

אני אהיה לו לאב והוא יהיה לי. ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα,
καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν.

13. hna '3b. LXX: בני אהה. LXX: υἱός μου εἶ σύ.

14. Traditional rabbinic interpretation agrees with Paul on this point. Thus Rashi on *I Chronicles* 17:13 and R. David Qimhi on *II Samuel* 7:14. Cf. Rashi and R. David Qimhi on *Psalms* 2:7. The latter explains “today” as the day of David's anointment and initial coronation, on which he also received the Holy spirit.

15. An extreme case of tampering with the text in order to exclude God's sons from it is apparent in a Qumran fragment of *Deuteronomy* 32:8, where the original “sons of God” has been replaced in the Massoretic Text with “sons of Israel” (and cf. the LXX version). see ske-han (1954); Ulrich (1995: 90); Knohl (2008: 95 and n. 5).

16. Thus we find Celsus's hypothetical Jew ridiculing the Christian version of Jesus' familial ties and presenting him as the bastard son of a poor country woman (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.28). For examples of the same argument in rabbinic literature see schäfer (2007: 15–24).

17. Josephus, *AJ* 11.302–347; *Megillat Ta'anit* on sivan 25th and Kislev 21st (in Noam (2003); *Bavli Yoma* 69a; *Romance*—? Chapter 20 (Trumpf 1974: 75–78), ? 2.23–4 (Engelmann 1963: 214–19).

18. For evidence of Oriental opposition to Hellenic imperialism (in other words, to Alexander's legacy), see Eddy (1961). A vivid present-day example of hatred towards the memory of Alexander can be seen in the second chapter of Michael Wood's BBC documentary *In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great*, at the Persian Gates.

19. *I Maccabees* 1:1–9. For a similar interpretation of Alexander's appearance in *Daniel* see Rappaport (1993a). stoneman (1994: 37f.) argues that this was also the initial response of *Eretz Israeli* Jewry to Alexander. However, according to the surviving historical accounts, the Jews do not seem to have suffered from his conquest at all: the sources offer a peaceful picture everywhere, save for Tyre, Gaza and samaria. The destruction of Tyre was certainly a terrifying event, but it could also be seen as the belated fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy (28:1–10). Philistine Gaza was never popular in Judea, and the massacre of the samaritans will have caused as much glee as woe (if not more). Further, *I Enoch* 90, depicting the Macedonians as vicious birds of prey, says nothing specific of Alexander. Considering that it was probably written at the time of the early victories of the Maqabis (Black 1985: 274; Nickelsburg 2001: 360–61; 2005: 83–86), it more likely relates to later Macedonian rulers. The quotations from the sibylline oracles (3.381–92; 4.88–94) are indeed strongly anti-Macedonian, but they too do not name Alexander in particular.

20. spak (1911: 20–43); Abrahams (1927: 7–12); Radet (1931: 134–35); simon (1941: 179); Kasher (1974/5); Golan (1982: 1991). In his translation of Curtius for the Loeb series, Rolfe assumed poetic license to add his own rendition of missing books I–II. Under this cover he, too, seems to accept the visit's historicity (I 56–58).

21. Gruen (1998a: 198).

22. A Jewish version of Alexander's *iter ad paradisum* (*Bavli Tamid* 32b) can be read as rabbinic reprimand of Alexander's theologically less agreeable sides, namely his aspiration to Divinity.

Already in the last stages of editing, I came across Collins and Collins (2008).

The main argument of their book, discernible already in its title *King and Messiah as Son of God*, is that Divine sonship indeed was a crucial cornerstone of biblical Davidic messianism and consequently of Christian theology. The conclusions drawn from their discussion (which deals with the evidence from the Israelite, Jewish and Christian angles, with hardly a reference to Alexander), agrees with my own analysis.

23.

τὸν γὰρ πάντων ἐπόπτην καὶ κτίστην θεὸν οὗτοι σέβονται, ὃν καὶ πάντες, ἡμεῖς δέ, βασιλεῦ, προσονομάζοντες ἑτέρως Ζῆνα καὶ Δία (§16). On the date of composition and identity of the author see: Hadas (1951: 3–73); Kahana (1951–56: II 3–6); Honigman (2003: 128–30).

24. Augustinus, *De Consensu Evangelistarum* 1.22.30 = Varro, *Antiquitates Rerum Divinarum* I frag. 48 (ed. Condemi 1965): Varro deum Iudaeorum Iovemputavit, nihil interesse censens, quo nomine nuncupetur, dum eadem res intellegatur.

25. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 5.41. Hengel (1974: I 262, II 173 n. 34).

26. *CIL* II suppl. 5665; Dunand (1975: 170).

27. Preisendanz (1928:1196–98); Goodenough (1953: II195); Mussies (1979:211 n. 61).

28.

τὸν πάντων ὑπατον θεὸν ἔμμεν Ἰαῶ, χεῖματι μέν τ' Αἴδην, Δία δ' εἶαρος ἀρχομένοιο, Ἥελιον δὲ θέρευσ, μετοπώρου δ' ἀβρὸν Ἰαῶ; *Sat.* 1.18.20. Macrobius gives as his source the treatise of Cornelius Labeo (second or third century c.E.) on the oracle of Klarian Apollo.

29. On the interplay of polytheistic syncretism with both evolutionary and revolutionary Monotheism see Assman (2004).

30. In Philostratos (*Vit.Ap.* 2.43) Alexander builds at the Hyphasis altars to “Ammon his father and Herakles his brother.”

31. *Shield* 27–29. Theokritos, *Id.* 24.80–81. Cf. [Chapter 7](#) for Nebuchadnezzar's role as ruler over humanity and wildlife in the *Midrash* of Ten Kings.

32. 1.84: τῆς γῆς καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων Σωτήρα; cf. 1.60. see also simon (1955: 131–32).

33. *Mem.* 2.1.21–34. see [Chapter 4](#) note 5, p. 185.

34. 1.65–83.

35. *Matthew* 4:1–11; *Luke* 4:1–13; briefly also in *Mark* 1:12–13.

36. πάσας τὰς βασιλείας τοῦ κόσμου
πάσας τὰς βασιλείας τῆς οἰκουμένης (*Matthew* 4:8; *Luke* 4:5:

37. Indeed, this and other similarities between the myths of Herakles and Jesus have led some scholars to suspect that the latter owes much to the former. According to Pfister (1937), the Herakles myth served as background and inspiration for the writers of the Gospels. Toyn-bee (1939: 465–76) stressed the evolutionary nature of the Herakles myth, and suggested that “the legend of Hēraklēs may be an important common source from which the story of Jesus on the one side and the stories of the pagan historical heroes on the other side may have derived some of their common features, independently of one another, through separate channels of the stream of ‘folk-memory.’” A more sophisticated argument, stressing not only the points of mutual influence between the myths of these two characters, but also the way in which they competed for popular devotion in the last centuries of antiquity, is presented by simon (1955: especially pp. 49–71, with discussion of earlier scholarship).

38. Note however Alexander's famous encounter with the Indian Philosophers.

While it is impossible to ascertain the exact content of the meeting, existing accounts—some of which go back to immediate primary sources—clearly present him as interested in the existential and cosmic meaning of his own life and deeds. For the sources and a modern treatment see [Chapter 4](#) note 93, p. 191.

39. For the influence of Horus on the myth of Christ, and on other perceived saviors at the time, see Norden (1958: 57, 76–137, explicitly 128).

40. seele (1947); Hart (1986: 88); Pinch (2004: 147). For Horus as ruler of all animals, and the similar role of Jesus Pantokrator see *OEAE*, s.v. “Horus” p. 121. Cf. ch. 1 note 100, p. 171.

41. *Vitae Prophetarum* 2 (= Jeremiah): 1–6. Discussion and further evidence: simon (1941: 185–89); stoneman (1994: 46–47).

42. *Revelation* 12:9. As with Herakles, the serpent tries to devour the infant Christ.

43. *Matthew* 3:7, 23:3; *Acts* 28:1–6. Compare the stories of Horus's healing from a snake (or scorpion) bite by his mother Isis, which “came to represent a promise by the gods to take care of suffering humanity” (Pinch 2004: 147).

44. see the earlier discussion in chapters 1 and 4.

45. *ANET* 14–17; Cf. the detailed, but late, rendition of Plutarch in *De Is. et Os.* (356b–e, cf. 368d). Fairman (1974); Hart (1986: 90); Pinch (2004: 78–85, 145).

46. 1.3, 34.

47. Already in Herodotus (2.144, 156).

48. Plutarch, *Alex.* 14.6–7; *Romance* ?, 1.45. see also [Chapter 4](#), pp. 66–67.

49. 330d:

εἷς ἂν νόμος ἅπαντας ἀνθρώπους διωκεῖτο καὶ πρὸς ἓν δίκαιον ὥς πρὸς κοινὸν ἐπέβλεπον φῶς. νῦν δὲ τῆς γῆς ἀνήλιον μέρος ἔμεινεν, ὅσον Ἀλέξανδρον οὐκ εἶδεν. Cf. 328e.

50. *John* 1:1–18; 8:12. On the rivalry between Jesus and sol Invictus, the widely popular late antique Mediterranean solar Divinity, see Wallraff (2005).

51. *Isaiah* 9:1 (MT); *Matthew* 4:12–17. More on light and shadow imagery in the context of world saviors in Norden (1958: 25, 92–99 *et passim*).

52. On the roots of virgin birth in ancient Egyptian mythology see Norden (1958: 25, 28, 80–81, 108).

53. Plutarch, *Alex.* 2.3–4 and the discussion in [Chapter 4](#).

54. *Matthew* 1:18–25; *Luke* 1:26–35. The same is true also of Herakles' mother, Alkmene. According to the strange story in *II Enoch* (chapter 23, according to the division of the slavonic Mss.) Melchizedek, too, was born in antediluvian times without sexual intercourse (although not necessarily from a virgin). However, the wide range of dates and contexts suggested for this work (and the Melchizedek story in particular) prevents any firm conclusions relating to our case. For the state of research see Nickelsburg (2005: 221–25 with notes on p. 397); Orlov (2005).

55.

ἡ μὲν οὖν νύμφη πρὸ τῆς νυκτός, ἡ συνείρχθησαν εἰς τὸν θάλαμον, ἔδοξε βροντῆς γενομένης ἐμπεσεῖν αὐτῆς τῇ γαστρὶ κεραυνόν . . . ὁ δὲ Φίλιππος ὑστέρῳ χρόνῳ μετὰ τὸν γάμον . . . (Plutarch, *Alex.* 2.3–4).

56. According to the spirit of pudicity inherent in monotheistic myth in general, and Christian myth in particular, Joseph is said to have abstained from carnal knowledge of his wife even *after* their marriage. This clarification serves at the same time to blunt the edge of the theological difficulties created by the notion of Divine sonship, and to remove any doubt as to the identity of Jesus' real Father.

57. For a vast variety of examples of Isis *Lactans* from all periods see the definitive collection by Tran (1973). On breastfeeding Isis and her relation to Mary

see Warner (1976: 192–205); Watterson (1988:97); Langener (1996, a book titled *Isis Lactans—Maria Lactans*); Witt (1997: 269–81); Donalson (2003: 6); Mathews and Muller (2005); Bolman (2005). In the Herakles tradition we find him as a baby, suckling on the breast of Hera, his surrogate mother (Diodorus 4.9.6; Pausanias 9.25.2). According to Diodorus, the bite of baby Herakles was so powerful that Hera shouted in pain and removed him from her breast. The milk squirted out in the process supposedly created our galaxy—the Milky Way. A reminiscent story is told of st. Mary and Bernard of Clairvaux.

58. This parallelism was pointed out by Norden (1958:113–15), who also calculated that the date of impregnation of both ladies coincides with the vernal equinox. For the assertion that “Mary is the direct continuation of the pagan goddesses” and that she “offers a way to deal with a major deficiency of Christian theology in which the feminine image of God has all but disappeared” see Benko (1993: quotation from pp. 264–65). Both he and Borgeaud (2004) put special emphasis on Mary's debt to the *Magna Mater*. These different emphases are complementary rather than contradictory.

59. Plutarch, *De Is. et Os.* 373f–374d. see further in Zivie-Coche (2004: 30–31), with examples of other trinities. This phenomenon gave rise to a variety of “Horus Avatars”: Har-pokrates, “Horus the child”; Harsiese, “Horus son of Isis”; Haredotes, “Horus avenger of his father”; Harsomtut, “Horus who unites the Two Lands” (*ibid.*).

60. Thus in the second century B.c. inscription from the temple of Isis in Kanopos, dedicated to serapis, Isis and Herakles (Visser 1938: 89; Bonnet 1952: 274).

61. *Aed.* 6.2.14–20. Cf. [Chapter 4](#) note 47, p. 188.

62. It lies far beyond my scope here to discuss the extent and means of influence exerted by the syncretistic triad principle on the development of the Christian Trinity. However, it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the notion of a Holy Triad Family was in no way foreign to the vast majority of the populace in the Greco-Roman world of late antiquity. In other words, new converts from various polytheistic religions to the fast-growing Christian faith will have found themselves, in this respect at least, on very familiar turf.

63. such is the general gist of Norden (1958; orig. 1924), Pfister (1937), Simon (1955), Thompson (2005), Collins and Collins (2008).

64. *Dialogue with Trypho* 69.

65. Incidentally, Alexander too showed a strong interest in medicine (Plutarch, *Alex.* 8.1, 41.7; Curtius 9.8.20–27).

66. *Matthew* 28; *Mark* 16; *Luke* 24; *John* 21; *Revelation* 22:7–20.

67. 80.18.1–3. The translation after Millar (1964: 214–18), with a treatment of the entire incident.

68. Cassius Dio 78.7.2. For all instances of Alexander emulation by Caracalla mentioned above see Dio 78.7–8,22.1; Herodian 4.8–9; *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, *Caracalla* 2; anonymous *Epitome de Caesaribus* 21.

69. A familiar resonance brings us to Egypt, with the legend of Nektanebo *redivivus*, returning to Egypt as the young Alexander (*Romance* 1.3).

70. Cf. Fowden (1993: 4–5).

71. εὐθύς Ἀλέξανδρος ἦν 4.8.1–2.

72. Dahmen (2007:136). Nor was Caracalla the sole Alexander-emulator among the Emperors of the early third century c.E. His namesake Severus kept a bust of Alexander the Great in his private chapel (*Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, *Alex. Sev.* 29.2, 31.5). Other *ani-mae sanctiores* in the *lararium* included Orpheus, Abraham and Apollonios of Tyana (on whom more below). More examples of the Alexander mania of the third century c. E. in Stewart (2003: 61–66).

73. An alternative to the Resurrection has Jesus survive torture on the cross and escape to India, where he teaches the *Torah*, studies Buddhism, lives to a ripe old age and is buried in Tibetan Kashmir. The first to have taken Jesus to India may have been Nikolai Notovitch (1890; but actually 1894, see reference list), who claimed to have found the *Gospel according to Jesus* in a Tibetan monastery. Jesus' post-Crucifixion life in India probably begins with Ghulam Ahmad (1962, orig. 1908), who used the story to fortify his position as founder and self-proclaimed Messiah of the Islamic Ahmadiyya sect. For later manifestations of this myth, which eventually ascribe to Jesus Indian journeys both before and after his ministry, see also Docker (1920); Shams (1945); Potter (1958); Faber-Kaiser (1977); Grönbold (1985); Klatt (1988); Kersten (2001); Dewan (2004: 447–60)—a partial list. Continuous searches for “Jesus in India” and “Jesus in Kashmir” on the Internet indicate that this particular telling of Jesus' end—plausibly a memetic replication of Alexander's history—is stably gaining ground.

74. For recent scholarship see Bowie (1978); Dzielska (1986); Flinterman (1995).

75. Philostratos, VA 1.4–6.

76. Aornos: VA 2.10. Poros's elephant: 2.12, 24. Hyphasis: 2.42–43; cf. Fowden (1993: 83–84). Like Alexander, Apollonios also met with a band of gymnosophists (6.6–22). That this encounter is set by Philostratos in Ethiopia seems to echo the old confusion of this land with India.

77. Witness the debate on the merits of Apollonios versus Jesus in the exchange between Hierokles and Eusebius, on the eve of the Christian takeover of the Roman Empire. For modern scholarship see Baur (1966); Petzke (1970); Dzielska (1986: 193–212); Flinterman (1995).

78. Ephesos: VA 4.10; cf. what seems to be a cure for rabies at Tarsos (6.43). Demonic youth: 4.20. Revived maiden: 6.45.

79. VA 8.31.

80. *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Alex. Sev. 29.2, 31.5.

81. 327f. Positive qualities: 327e; 332c; 342f–343b.

82. 328c. Never mind that all this has little to do with reality. What matters here is not the historicity of Plutarch's claims, but rather the fact that he made them at all.

83. 329a–c. This and other such passages stand at the heart of Tarn's famous thesis “Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind” (1933). He is rightly criticized by Badian (1958) for ignoring the rhetorical, idealized nature of Alexander in the *De Fortuna*, but his observations retain their strength if used to illuminate the possible perceptions of Alexander in the first centuries c.E., as was correctly observed by Thomas (1968).

84.

κοινὸς θεόθεν ἄρμωσθης καὶ διαλλακτῆς τῶν ὄλων (329c); Ἀλεξάνδρῳ δ' ἐπέταττε
(329c); ἡ Ἀρετὴ τὸν βασιλικὸν καὶ θεῖον ἄθλον (342a).

85. Tyche: 327a; 340e–341a; 341e–f. Alexander and Herakles: 341e–342a. His soul recalled by a *Daimon*: 330d. According to Curtius (10.6.6.), the notion that Alexander was merely sent to this world as a loan by the Gods, to be recalled when his services to humankind were completed, had been expressed already by Perdikkas, soon after Alexander's death. It is not impossible that Perdikkas did in fact make such a statement, or at least that Curtius found it in one of the first generation Alexander-historians. Full citation in [Chapter 6](#) note 7, p. 197.

86. I do not mean to suggest here that the devotees of ancient polytheistic faiths did not believe in the existence of their Gods. Nevertheless, even true believers will have noticed a difference between a mythical character and a historical one. A good example comes from the famous hymn composed in Athens in honor of Demetrios Poliorketes a generation after Alexander's death: “For other Gods are either far

away, or have not ears, or are not, or heed us not at all; but thee we can see in very presence, not in wood and not in stone, but in truth” (Athenaios 6.253e; trans. Gulick, Loeb).

87.

καὶ ἐνόμιζε . . . τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔχειν ψυχὴν, μᾶλλον δὲ αὐτὸς εἶναι Ἀλέξανδρος ἐν ἑτέρῳ σώματι

(*Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.21.7). Many thanks to Ms. Hanneke Berman, who brought this *locus* to my attention. On this topic see further Baynes (1912); Athanassiadi-Fowden (1981: 192–93, 224–25); smith (1995: 13, 168).

88. Ch. 4–5. *Patrologia Graeca* 61, p. 581 (ed. Migne).

89. That Alexander the Great is meant here should be clear enough from his appearance later in the text. Had another Alexander (severus?) been meant here, this ought to have been mentioned specifically, as in the mention of Alexander the Coppersmith several lines above. Contrary claims have been convincingly refuted by straub (1970).

90. Already in Tertullian, *Apology* 21.

91. Quotation from Dahmen (2007: 37). The seminal work on the contorniates is the voluminous Alföldi and Alföldi (1976/1990). see also Vermeule (1980: 117 ^37); Fulghum (2001: 140–45); saunders (2006: 109); Dahmen (2007: 37–38, 152–54); stoneman (2008: 200).

92. All contorniate types discussed here are neatly organized in Alföldi and Alföldi (1976/1990: I 1–19; plates 1–23).

93. Alexander's coinage is discussed in [Chapter 1](#).

94. Alföldi and Alföldi (1976/1990: plate 15 ^9; Catalogue [vol. I] p. 13 ^42).

95. By Michelini-Tocci; see Alföldi and Alföldi (1976/1990: I 13 ^42).

96. *Ad Illuminandos Catechesis* 2.5 (trans. schaff). *Patrologia Graeca* 49, p. 240 (ed. Migne).

97. The title is by Wallis Budge (1889: 144–58), as is the translation.

98. Budge (1889: 158).

99. *Jeremiah* 1:14. This prophecy is mentioned specifically in relation to the Final Battle (p. 155). An earlier oracle cast by Alexander predicts that two Hun incursions would take place, one dated to the end of the fifth century c.E., the other to the early seventh. It is hard to know whether the later date represents the actual time of writing, or is merely a subsequent tag on. For the attribution of the role of apocalyptic raiders to the Arab Beduins see Kaegi (1992: 137–38). For later transmutations in the identity of the shut-out nations, and in the locality of Alexander's Gates, see Anderson (1932).

100. Budge (1889:146–47). Alexander returns to Jerusalem at the end of story, and fulfills his promise.

101. Cf. *Habakkuk* 2:3; *Bavli Sanhedrin* 97b.

CONCLUSION

1.

Plut.

Mor.

330d:

εἰ δὲ μὴ ταχέως ὁ δεῦρο καταπέμψας τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρου ψυχὴν ἀνεκα
λέσατο δαίμων.

2. *John* 18:10–11.

APPENDIX A. ALEXANDER AND DAVID

1. Ps.-Hegesippus, *De Excidio Urbis Hierosolymitanae* 5.19 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* vol. 66, 338–40).

2. II Samuel 21:15–17. The author uses poetic license in his treatment of the biblical story.
3. Verum Alexandrum eventus servavit, prophetam gratia.
4. 79.47–70 (= Flusser 1978: 373–74).
5. For Alexander as lion-slayer see [Chapter 2](#), p. 33. For David see *I Samuel* 17:36–37. It matters little how much of what the Bible tells of David represents actual events, even whether David ever existed as a historical figure. Enough for our case that by Jesus' time the stories of David were already well known in about the same form as we know them today.
6. For various estimates of the cubit see Tarn (1948: II 169–74); Hamilton (1969: 166), but see Brunt's remark in (1976–83: II 59 n. 1). In any case, a man standing slightly over 2 meters tall is surely not a biological impossibility.
7. *I Samuel* 17:1–51; but cf. the intriguing notice at *II Samuel* 21:19.
8. sogdiana: Curtius 7.5.1–12; Plutarch, *Alex.* 42.5–10. Makran: Arrian 6.26.1–3; Poly-ainos 4.3.25 (he does not state the location specifically, but otherwise conforms to the story as told by Arrian). Africa (presumably on the road to or from siwah?): Frontinus, *Strat.* 1.7.7.
9. *Philalexandria*: Curtius 3.12.15–17; Plutarch, *Alex.* 47.9–10. Posthumous cult: Diodorus 17.115.6; Plutarch, *Alex.* 72.3; Arrian 7.23.6; Justin 12.12.12.
10. The opposite claim, that David's story owes its inspiration to Alexander, would necessitate the even more radical assumption that *II Samuel* 23:13–17 was written some time during the Hellenistic age. such a view would be even harder to defend.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ANET</i>	Pritchard, B., ed. 1955. <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Related to the Old Testament</i> . Princeton: University Press.
<i>BAGRW</i>	Talbert, J. A., ed. 2000. <i>Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World</i> . Princeton: University Press.
<i>BMC</i>	<i>Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum</i> . 1873-. London; reprinted Bologna: 1963-.
<i>CAH²</i> =	Boardman, John, I. E. s. Edwards, N. G. L. Hammond, Edmond sollberger, and C.B. F.Walker. 1991. <i>The Cambridge Ancient History. Vol. 3, Part 2, The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and Other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries B.C.</i> Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> . 1863-. Berlin: De Gruyter.
<i>EAAE</i>	Bard, K. A., ed. 1998. <i>Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt</i> . London and New York: Routledge.
<i>EI</i>	Yarshater, E., ed. 1982-2006. <i>Encyclopaedia Iranica</i> . London: Routledge.
<i>FGrH</i>	Jacoby, F. 1923-. <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> . Berlin and Leiden.
<i>Insch. Eryth.</i>	Engelman, E. and R. Merkelbach, eds. 1973. <i>Die Inschriften von Erythrai und Klazomenai</i> . Bonn.
<i>Itin. Alex.</i>	Intinerarium Alexandri. Ed. K. Müller. 1846. <i>The Fragments of the Lost Historians of Alexander the Great</i> . Paris; reprint Chicago: Ares, 1979.
<i>LÄ</i>	Helck, W., and E. Otto, eds. 1972-92. <i>Lexikon der Ägyptologie</i> . Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz.
<i>LGPN</i>	Fraser, P. M. and E. Matthews, eds. 1987-2000. <i>A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names</i> . Oxford: University Press. (Vol. ii eds. s. G. Byrne and M. J. Osborne.)
<i>LSJ⁹</i>	Liddell, H.G. and R. scott. <i>Greek English</i>

OEAE

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10/12.5 Minion Pro

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Minion Pro

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